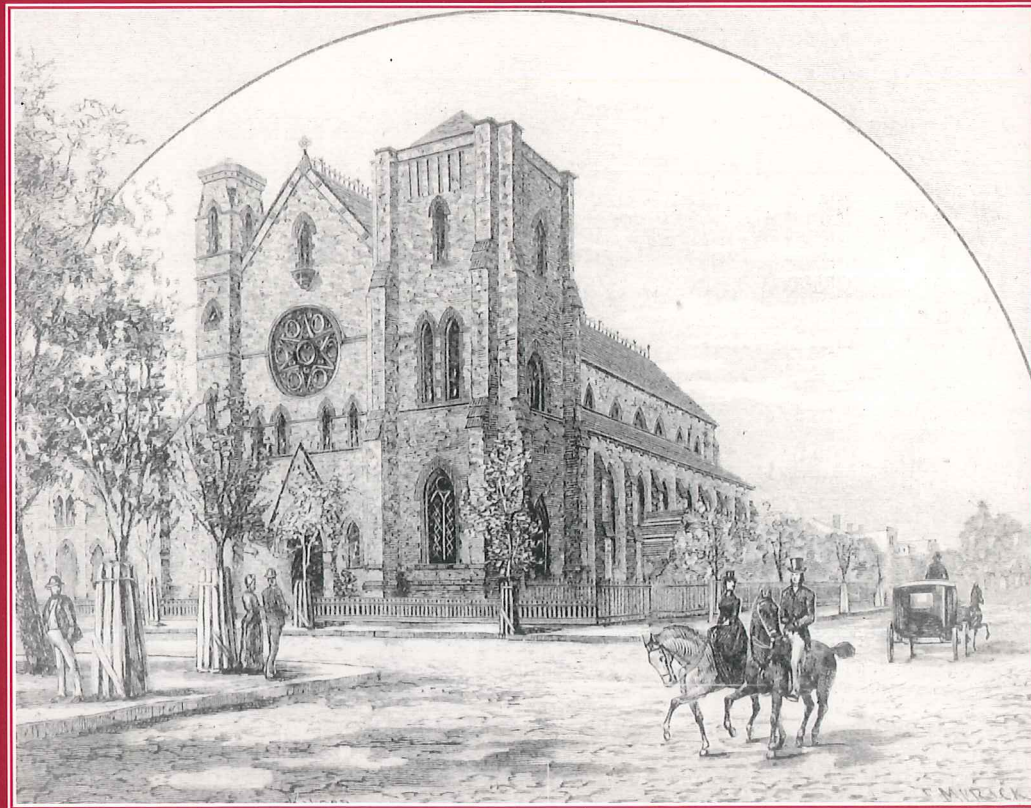


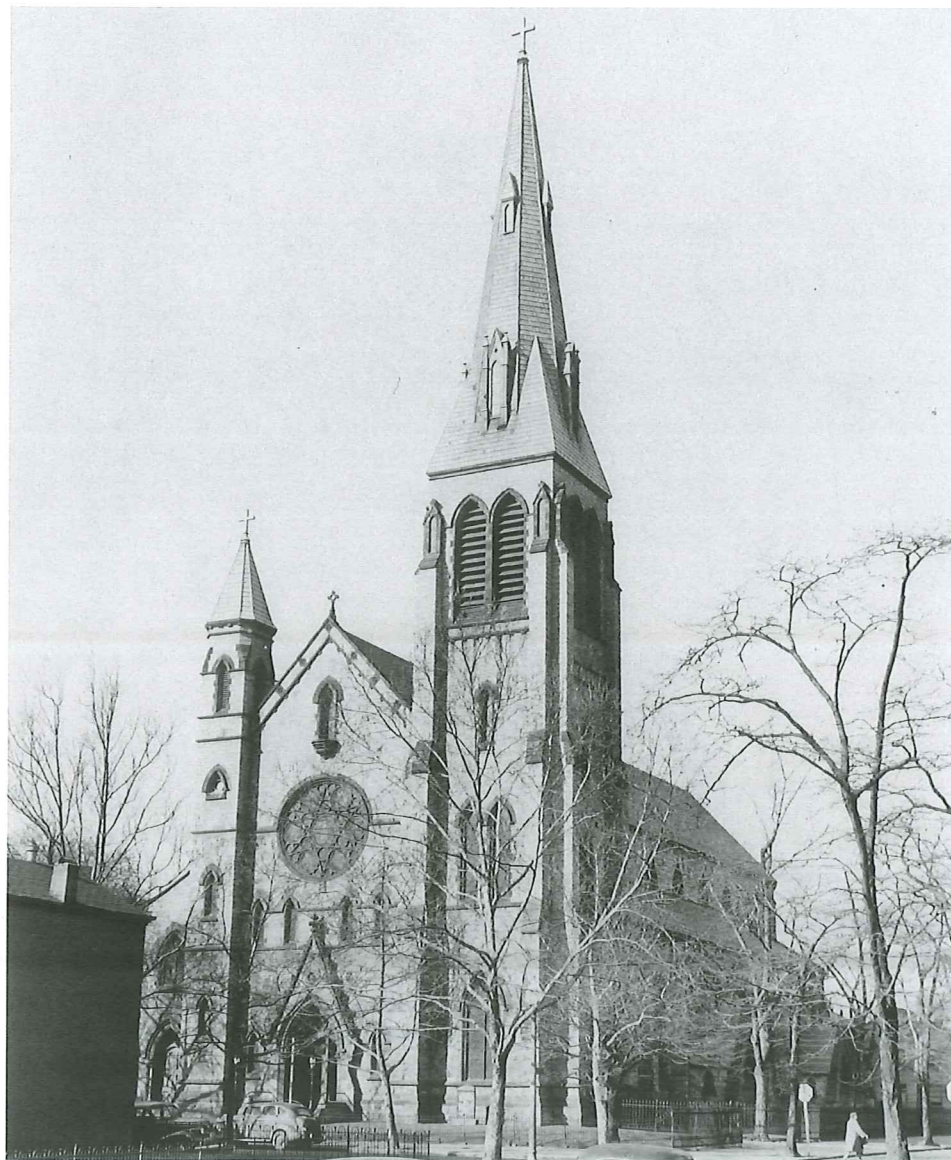
St. Dominic's Parish

Washington, D.C.

A Sesquicentennial Celebration



1852—2002



St. Dominic's Parish

Washington, D.C.



CAPITOL
PHOTO
SERVICE

CENTENARY OF SAINT DOMINIGS CHURCH

WASHINGTON D.C. NOV. 9-10-11, 1952



St. Dominic's Parish

Washington, D.C.

1852—2002

A Sesquicentennial Celebration

Mary E. Moran

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On the cover: St. Dominic's Church appears substantial and welcoming in its unfinished state and idealized setting, graced with gentle parishioners afoot and on horseback. The undated engraving must have been made between the building's dedication in 1875 and the completion of its towers and signature spire in 1888.

Half-title page: The finished church has risen to its full height—in a photograph probably taken in the 1930s.

Title page: Hundreds of the faithful congregate at St. Dominic's to witness its one-hundredth anniversary in 1952. Leading the celebration are Bishop Patrick O'Boyle, the archbishop of Washington, and Bishop Celestine Daly, O.P., secretary to the Apostolic Delegate.

This book is dedicated to the many volunteers of St. Dominic's Church—devoted men and women through the years—who have given of their time and talent to make their parish a life-giving locus of Christian values.



Over the decades, St. Dominic's has sponsored a host of social and musical activities that have enriched the parish for its own people and represented this church to the wider world. No youngsters' group offered a brighter face to Washington than the marching band in its 1920s heyday.

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*As many a child looks most angelic
at his or her First Communion,
did any group of children look
more like competition for celestial
bands than these?*



His Holiness Pope John Paul II

as a pledge of divine favor bestows the Apostolic Blessing upon

The Priests and Parishioners of
Saint Dominic Church
Washington, District of Columbia

on the occasion of its 150th Anniversary
May 4th, 2002

Washington, D.C.

+ *Gabriel Montalvo*

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo
Apostolic Nuncio

Introduction

Everyone who knows Washington, D.C. is familiar with the sight of the copper-green spire of St. Dominic's Church as they drive down the Southwest Freeway. People use this spire as a landmark to know which exit to turn off as they are rushing to work, going downtown, visiting a friend, heading for a meeting in nearby government agencies, having dinner on the Potomac, lobbying Congress. This spire is also a spiritual landmark for many, as it identifies a parish that plays an important role in their spiritual and personal lives.

The church is a place of prayer, contemplation, comfort, inspiration, and a sanctuary in which one can put things in perspective. It has influenced people's everyday lives for one-hundred-fifty years—more than two-thirds the life of the nation. Uncounted parishioners have celebrated major passages of life here—baptisms, first communions, confirmations, weddings, ordinations, and funerals. People from all walks of life and from around the world have found the presence of God here, occasionally in the most tragic of times or situations, and also in moments of national or personal joy.

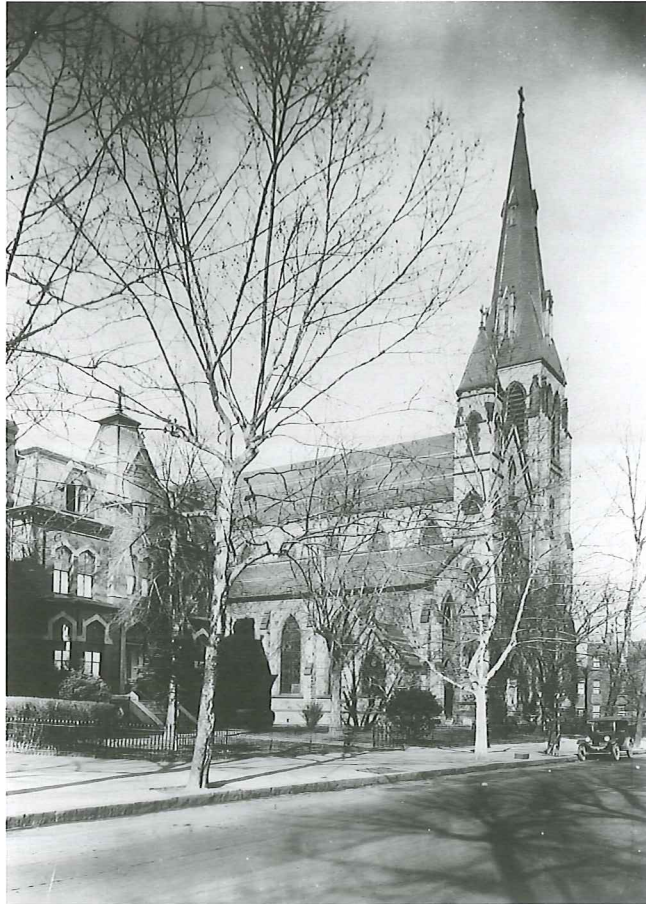
The history of St. Dominic's is a story of the many forces—social, economic, religious and cultural—that have shaped the parish, the city and the nation that surround us. Founded in 1852, St. Dominic's is the only Dominican parish in Washington and is the city's sixth oldest Catholic church. It is in many ways a grand reli-

gious center drawing on the centuries-old ideals of Dominican spirituality and the church's patron, St. Dominic [1170–1221]. The Dominican mission of integrating contemplation with preaching influences its diverse congregation. Located close to the U.S. Capitol, the parish has witnessed the city's evolution from the backwater hub of an infant nation to the seat of the world's most powerful government. Today its closest neighbors include the headquarters of such federal agencies as the Department of Education, Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and U.S. International Trade Commission. Because of its location in this capital city, St. Dominic's has participated in the triumphs and tragedies of America's history.

St. Dominic's is integral to the history of a special quadrant of the capital city, Southwest Washington; indeed, it has been responsible for much of that history. This church is a great legacy to its parishioners and to the many government workers who attend services during the week. As well, it is a spiritual haven and a place of prayer for many more, whether worshippers who come to pray or tourists from throughout the country—and indeed the world—who are drawn to its doors by the vision of that familiar, slender spire.

Of course, many comers know little of its history. Even some of its regular parishioners have had little access to the stories of its past. So on the occasion of

this anniversary, here is a collection of its own historical milestones—episodes from the continuing legacy of St. Dominic's Church. +



Here, possibly in the 1920s, the edifice of St. Dominic's Church seems to shelter its smaller neighbor, the mansard-roofed rectory, which housed the parish's friars for nearly four score years until its demise in the van of urban renewal.

Benjamin Young came to Maryland around 1735 as Commissioner of Crown Lands and soon married Ann Rozier Carroll, a widow and member of one of the first families. Under the law he would have acquired her land and property by marrying her; he also took her Catholic faith and lost his official post as a result. Maryland had been founded a century earlier as the first colony to guarantee religious freedom, but it had long since rescinded that freedom, made the Church of England its official religion and passed laws restricting the rights of Catholics (and Quakers) to vote or hold office. Still, Young prospered as one of Maryland's last "Catholic gentlemen," and bequeathed to his son, Notley Young, both his vast estates and his devout faith.

Some of those lands lay within the a ten-mile-square tract of woods, marsh and meadows straddling the Potomac River that was designated in 1790 the future capital of the United States. Notley Young owned much of the lower reaches of the new District of Columbia, what we now call Southwest Washington. A wealthy plantation owner or "planter" in the usage of the day, he married Eleanor Digges and, after her death, Mary Carroll. Both of his wives came from notable Catholic families, and both were sisters of leading Catholic priests. Eleanor's brother, Father Thomas Digges, S.J., said the first Mass on record in what

became the nation's capital. Mary's brother was Archbishop John Carroll, America's first Catholic bishop. Both priests frequently officiated at services in Notley Young's manor house, located on what became G Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets SW, where L'Enfant Plaza stands today.

When Notley Young died on March 24, 1802, at the age of 65, his estate included more than 3,000 acres in Washington, Maryland and Virginia. Under the terms of his will, most of the land in Southwest Washington went to his children, Ann and Eleanor, Benjamin, Nicholas, and Notley, Jr. Of particular note, Square 466 went to his namesake son, who was by then the Reverend Notley Young, Jr., S.J., a professor of philosophy at Georgetown College. Father Young in turn willed the land to that Jesuit college to be used for purposes of religion and education after his death. Thirty-three years later, in 1853, the college sold the parcel to the Dominicans so they could build a parish church there.

The elder Notley Young's other children and grandchildren also gave generously to the Catholic Church in the District of Columbia, especially by donating land for Catholic cemeteries and by providing financial support to the Dominican Order. Nicholas Young married the sister of Father Edward Fenwick, founder of the Order's St. Joseph's Province, which was then headquartered in Kentucky. Nicholas became very close to his brother-in-law and donated money and land to the

A Planter Bequeaths a Parish

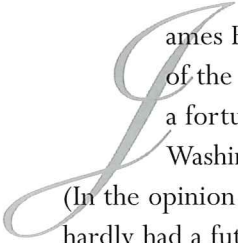




Notley Young looks very much the gentleman in this portrait by an unknown painter of the late 18th century. The lady is almost certainly his wife—but whether Eleanor Diggs, who died early, or Mary Carroll, who succeeded her—remains a mystery.

Order. In time, Nicholas's sons, Robert and Nicholas, Jr., attended St. Thomas College in Kentucky, the first Catholic college in the West, and decided to become Dominican priests (though Robert died at 21 before his ordination).

Nicholas Young, Jr. joined the Order in 1810 and was ordained in 1817. The following year, as Father Young, he traveled with his uncle, Father Fenwick, to extend the Kentucky-based Order into Ohio, where he used his inheritance to buy property for the Dominicans. Father Young continued to be interested in the life of his native city, often reading Washington's *Daily Intelligencer* along with his Bible. Remembered as the "Founder of St. Dominic's," he played the key role in acquiring land, previously owned by his grandfather, Notley Young, to establish St. Dominic's Church in the capital city. It was he who arranged for the Dominicans to buy Square 466 from Georgetown College for \$5,055—the square that would be the seat of St. Dominic's Parish, and in which he would serve as one of its first pastors. ✚



James Barry, a visionary and wealthy citizen of the prosperous city of Baltimore, risked a fortune when he predicted that Southwest Washington would become an important port. (In the opinion of most people at the time, Washington hardly had a future at all as the seat of a small Federal government, with a tiny staff of clerks and a Congress of part-time legislators.) Barry and his wife had left their native Ireland in the late 18th century, settled for a time in Lisbon, then in 1793 came to Baltimore where he established wharves, warehouses and offices. Four years later, he moved to Washington.


Setting up as a merchant pursuing trade between foreign governments, Barry built a home at what is now Half and P Streets SW. This was in the area known as “the Island,” bounded as it was by the Potomac River, St. James Creek and the canal that served Capitol Hill along a route that is now the National Mall. Convinced of Washington’s potential for commercial development, Barry purchased large tracts of land—altogether some 800 acres—on both sides of the Eastern Branch (or Anacostia River).

This entrepreneur had influential friends, among them George Washington, Notley Young and Bishop Carroll, whom he served as a confidential advisor on business matters. Another of his friends was William Magee Seton, the son of a wealthy Scottish merchant

who died at the age of 35, leaving a widow with five children. Elizabeth Ann Seton turned to the Barrys for support, and some believe they influenced her decision to become a Catholic. Because relatives opposed her conversion, Mrs. Seton had to find a way to support herself and her children and so became a teacher. She opened the first free parochial school in the United States, and founded the American Sisters of Charity. Nearly two centuries later, in 1975, she was canonized as the first saint born in this country.

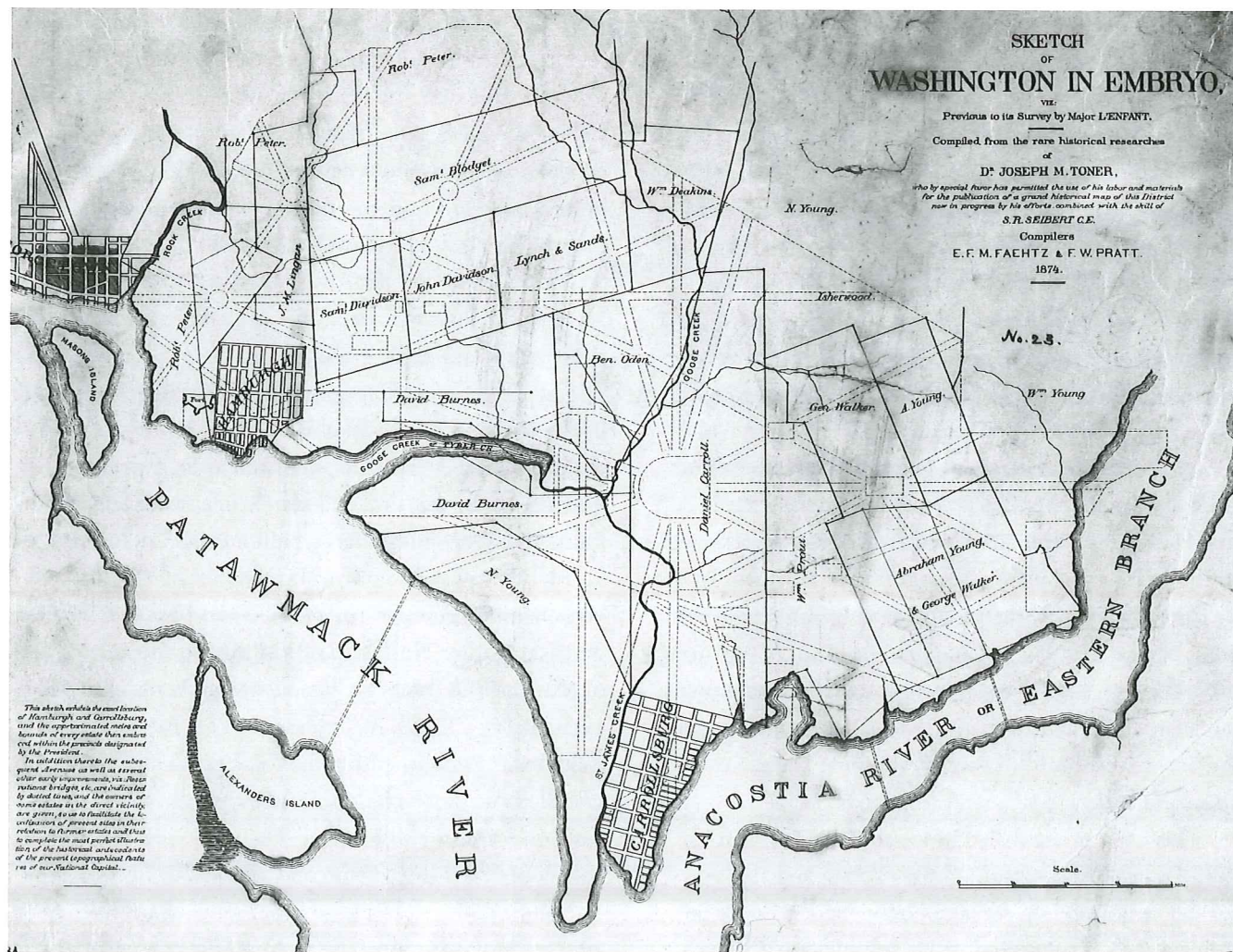
By 1806, a small community of Washington’s Catholics lived on the Island, which was remote from the city’s established churches such as St. Patrick’s downtown. In that era, private chapels were fairly common, and at his home Barry built a chapel dedicated to St. Mary, in part as a gift to his neighbors. A letter survives from December 10, 1806, when Bishop Carroll wrote to Father Notley Young approving the celebration of Masses in St. Mary’s Chapel, which was also known as the Barry Chapel. As a mission of St. Patrick’s, this chapel was established for the local residents, and would serve those good purposes until St. Peter’s was built on Capitol Hill in 1821. Then the chapel was abandoned, fell into disuse and allowed to decay.

Meanwhile, misfortune beset James Barry. Washington did not become the commercial center he imagined, nor had he invested wisely, as large sums



A Legacy of Faith: The Barry Chapel

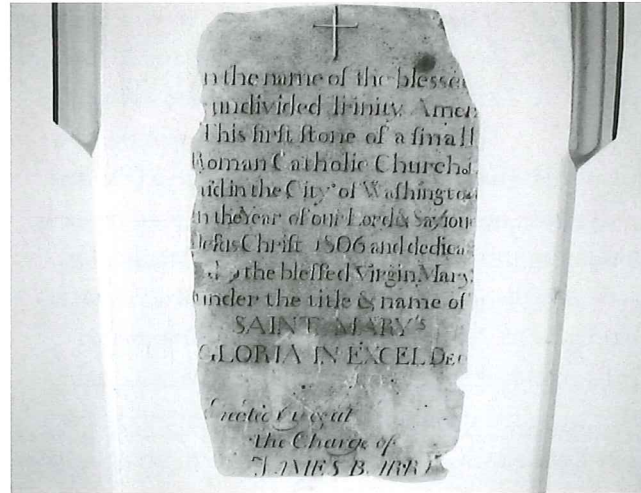
A historical map of 1874 shows "Washington in Embryo," i.e., at the turn of the nineteenth century when Pierre L'Enfant planned the city that arose out of swamp and meadow. The map declares that N. [Notley] Young owns most of land that is now Southwest Washington, bounded by the "Potawmack" River, Goose (a.k.a. Tiber) Creek and St. James Creek, the latter two all but forgotten today. Other features that have since vanished include the communities of Hamburgh (now the site of Foggy Bottom) and Carrollsbury (Fort McNair), while the very shape of the shoreline has been changed radically by nature and engineering.



of money were now owed him by foreign governments. When Barry died in 1808, he left a will to dispose of a considerable estate, but its assets were found to be almost non-existent, save for a collection of seven paintings by Gilbert Stuart. Besides portraits of Barry himself and his family, one was of George Washington and another of Bishop Carroll, which would eventually go to Georgetown University and now hangs in the Healy Building.

Father Young, who frequently said Mass in the Barry Chapel and bequeathed to Georgetown College the land that decades later became the site of St. Dominic's, died on August 1, 1820. He left a will declaring, "I have reason to believe there were legacies left to me by the late James Barry... [S]hould there be any legacies left to me," he in turn bequeathed them to his great niece Sarah Ann Young and great nephew Nicholas R. Young. Sarah Ann became a Dominican sister and Nicholas a priest who served as pastor of St. Dominic's from 1856 to 1860.

Decades after James Barry's death, when the ground was being excavated for St. Dominic's Church, the cornerstone of the Barry Chapel was discovered, and saved. Today, the cornerstone stands as part of the south entrance wall, where its words seem as apt in the 21st century as in the 19th:




Here stands the cornerstone of the erstwhile Barry Chapel, rescued and erected in the south entrance of the new church.

*In the name of the blessed and undivided Trinity. Amen.
This first stone of a small Roman Catholic Church is laid in
the city of Washington in the year of our Lord & Savior Jesus
Christ, 1806, and dedicated to the blessed Virgin Mary under
the title and name of St. Mary's. Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Erected by and at the charge of James Barry.*

Instead of a legacy of material riches, James Barry bequeathed an enduring legacy of faith. ✚



The Pastor Builds a Church

n the first day of the year 1807, a boy was born into a God-fearing Methodist home in Morgantown, Virginia, and christened George. Growing up in part of the state that would eventually be West Virginia, he worked as a carpenter; in time he came to be influenced by early Dominican missionaries and became a Catholic. He was especially influenced by Father Edward Fenwick, founder of St. Joseph's Province of the Dominican Order, and Father Nicholas Young, the Washington native who led the Dominican expansion into Ohio from Kentucky. George's commitment to his new faith was such that he was ordained a priest, Father George Augustine Joseph Wilson, O.P.

Father Wilson became a lifelong friend of Father Young and a leader within St. Joseph's Province, which then comprised the entire eastern United States. He won a wide reputation in the pulpit as a zealous preacher—especially as a fiery advocate of total abstinence from alcohol. He also ministered to the sick and was highly resourceful in building churches. The principal field of his labor was Ohio and a new church in Zanesville was started under his direction. He was dispatched to these places because of his managerial skills, in part, and his evangelical talents, which won large numbers of converts to the Church. When he served at St. Joseph's Priory in Somerset, Ohio, his gifts were recognized by

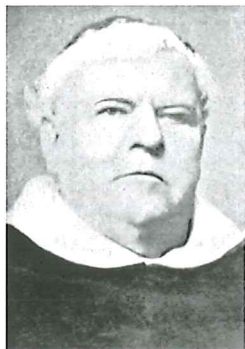
the Very Reverend Matthew A. O'Brien, O.P., who as the Provincial of St. Joseph's Province was the Order's spiritual and administrative leader in the region.

Father Wilson later was himself elected provincial of the Province of St. Joseph. His selection was partly due to his leadership of the abstinence movement and his fiery sermons against the "Demon Rum." During his term as provincial, from 1842 to 1847, the province made notable progress. In particular, Father Wilson influenced members to follow more closely their mission of balancing study with ministry. He also proved to be a good fundraiser while attending a worldwide assembly of Dominicans in Rome and traveling extensively.

By 1852, Father Matthew O'Brien, chose Father Wilson to establish a parish in Washington—the first Dominican parish east of the Alleghenies—at the invitation of Bishop Francis P. Kenrick of Baltimore. However, there was intramural controversy about building a church in Washington, after the Order had declined a generous invitation to establish a parish in Cincinnati. "An absurdity more solemn and gross has never been committed" than proposing to move into Washington, a delegate of the Order's Master General reported. Father O'Brien was sharply chastised for taking the action without seeking higher authorization, but the new church in Washington went forward nevertheless.

Father Wilson worked with his close friend Father Nicholas Young to find an appropriate site for the new church and picked Square 466 in southwest Washington, the property that Father Notley Young had inherited and in turn bequeathed to Georgetown College. Once the land was purchased from the Jesuit school, Father Wilson found that his skills as a carpenter came in handy, for as the founding pastor here his first major task was actually to raise a church building—a small, one-story structure that provided space for both religious services and education programs.

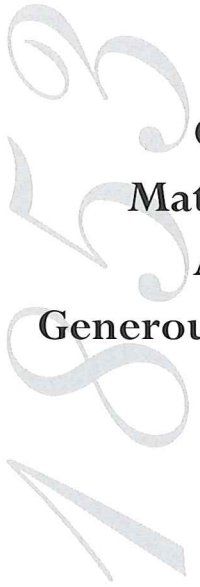
After successfully setting up this parish, Father Wilson was sent to New York City in the spring of 1867 to build the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer. It is now one of the city's premier churches and headquarters of St. Joseph's Province. +



		Sq	Lot	Recapitulation of the above Square No. 438.					
1845.	Sept. 20	438	1	Sold to	Wm. Devahn	dead	.50	63.06	265.28
1851.	July. 11	"	2	See Lot, 14 to	Wm. R. Riley			*	
1864.	Apr. 23	"	3	Sold to	Jas. A. McDevitt	dead	1.00		490.00
1847.	Sept. 1.	"	4	Sold to	Sam. Bacon		.50	38.29	207.15
1861.	Mar. 31	"	5	Sold to	John Vansiver	dead	spec		470.00
1863.	Nov. 3	"	6	Sold to	Edw. C. Adams	"	1.00		500.00
1854.	Mar. 15	"	7	Sold to	Thos. Lewis & Lewis	"	.50		425.00
1846.	Feb. 7th	"	8	Sold to	Robt. Mahony	"	.50	86.66	207.15
1851.	Sept. 20	"	9	Sold to	Robt. M. Harrison	"	.50		265.83
1864.	Sept. 19	"	10	Sold to	Thompson Javens	dead	1.50		577.00
1850.	July 8.	"	11		C. B. Church	"	.50	55.19	265.28
1852.	Mar. 20	"	12		J. Skrivs	"	.50	19.59	382.93
1850.	Apr. 1.	"	13	1 st Sold to	Curtis & Thompson	Harry	.50	22.96	274.20
1851.	July 11	"	14	2 nd Sold to	W. R. Riley	"	.50	36.20	600.00
1853.	May. 9.	466	17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26	Sold to	Rev. G. A. J. Wilson (Dominican)			481.63	5055.00

A ledger in the archives of Georgetown University records the sale of Square 466 to the "Rev. G. A. J. Wilson (Dominican)" on May 9, 1853 for the princely sum of \$5055.

Left: Father George Augustine Joseph Wilson, O.P., once the Provincial of St. Joseph Province, and ever the preacher, carpenter and Dominican priest.



George Mattingly: A Most Generous Host

Money was scarce and the number of Catholics in Southwest Washington was small. Before land transactions could be completed and a church built, George Mattingly came to Father Wilson's aid. Mattingly had moved to Washington from rural St. Mary's County, Maryland, once the seat of the Lords Calvert, the Catholic proprietors of the colony that had been the first to grant religious freedom on this continent.

Mattingly opened his house as a place of worship for parishioners and provided living quarters for the Dominicans in his home with his family—his wife, six sons and one daughter. Located on F Street between Four-and-a-Half and Sixth Streets (where the Southwest Freeway is today), the dwelling was one of the earliest houses in Southwest Washington with an unobstructed view of the Potomac River.

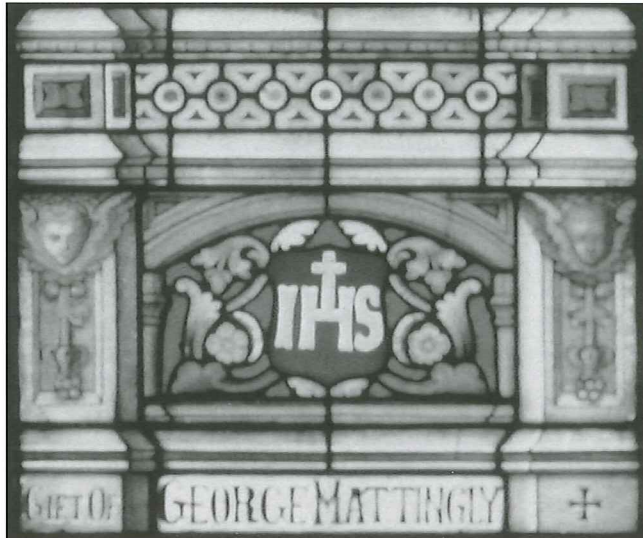
Mass was celebrated in Mattingly's home and other services were conducted there as well. In a reminiscence of his grandfather, Judge Robert E. Mattingly, a judge in the District of Columbia, wrote that, "people attending would stand and kneel out into the street during the Mass." For more than a year, the home of George Mattingly served as a church for the people of Southwest Washington and as their pastor's residence—in effect the cradle of a new parish.

Parish events here included a number of "firsts." The first baptism was for Elizabeth Frances, daughter of Henry W. and Rachael Freeman Wathen on April 16, 1853. The first marriage was between William Walsh and Margaret Donohoe on July 30, 1853. The first funeral was for William Donovan, who died on May 2, 1853, and was buried two days later in St. Patrick's Graveyard.

Having prospered as the superintendent of the Norfolk Steamboat Company, George Mattingly made substantial contributions toward constructing the new church. (He had previously helped Father Young and Father Fenwick establish the Dominican Order in Ohio. In later years, the Mattingly family donated the stained glass window of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one of the front grand altar windows, which can be seen today.) Construction of the first church and rectory was completed in 1854, and on March 19, the church was dedicated under the title and patronage of Saint Dominic. Thus arose the first Dominican parish east of the Allegheny Mountains.

George Mattingly's hospitality and generosity place him among St. Dominic's most influential benefactors. ✚

As its lower panel describes, the stained glass window depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus was the "Gift of George Mattingly." One of five works of art piercing the chancel wall above the altar, it is flanked on the left by the Virgin Mary, patroness of the Dominican Order, and St. Dominic, its founder, and on the right by St. Joseph, patron saint of the Order's St. Joseph Province, and St. Thomas Aquinas, the brightest intellectual light of the Order.





Congress Recognizes St. Dominic's

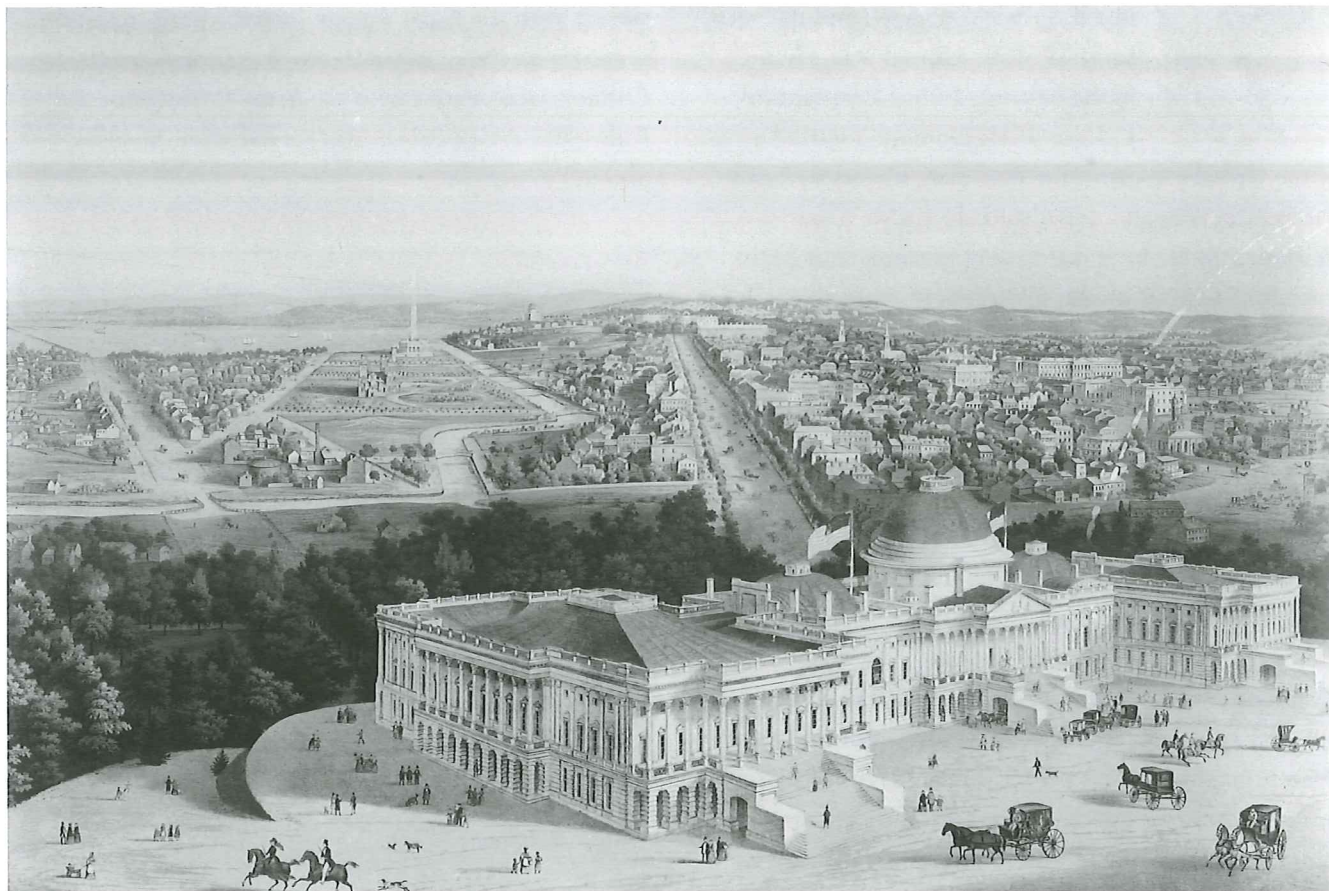
Father Wilson had been the original recipient of the deed when the land was purchased from Georgetown College, but all Dominicans profess a vow of poverty, and this in practical terms meant that ownership had to be transferred to the Order. It became necessary then to establish a civil corporation so that the local Dominican community could own the land.

On February 19, 1856, Senator Stephen Russell Mallory of Florida, who attended St. Dominic's, introduced legislation on behalf of the Dominicans in Washington. Ten days later the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia approved the bill; the Senate passed it on April 25 and the House on May 29. On June 2, President Franklin Pierce signed the Act of Congress into law, and thus established the St. Thomas Literary Society as the legal, corporate identity of the Dominicans in Washington. The new law allowed the Dominican Order to buy and sell property in the District of Columbia, albeit property only up to the value of \$500,000, which was a fortune then, but the stipulation would have implications a century later.

The law named St. Dominic's first three pastors—Father Young, Father Wilson and Father Clarkson—and their successors as incorporators “for purposes of charity and education.” The legislation further provided that the corporation shall “have and enjoy the power and faculty to confer and confirm upon such pupils...or

others who, [merit] by their proficiency in learning or other meritorious distinctions, ...such degrees in the liberal arts and sciences as are usually granted in colleges.”

Father Wilson signed a deed assigning the church's real estate to the St. Thomas Literary Society, which has held title for the St. Dominic's Church property ever since. +



A bird's eye vision of Capitol and capital—the bird is flying west—in a colored lithograph published in 1852, a year before Dominican priests come to the swampy and sylvan Southwest (offpage left). The city appears a virtual paradise, with an imagined monument to George Washington rising at the far end of the Mall. That greensward already features the Smithsonian Institution's "Castle" and is bordered by the canal that would be replaced by Constitution Avenue.

Pastor Serves as Military Chaplain

While the Civil War raged and the very survival of the United States hung in the balance, Father Constantine L. Egan of St. Dominic's visited a unit of the Union's Army of the Potomac, bivouacked near Warrenton, Virginia, less than a day's ride from Washington. He intended to stay just long enough to minister to two Catholic soldiers sentenced to death for desertion, but while there he met the officers and men of the 9th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, who pleaded with him to become their chaplain. A veteran regiment composed of Irish Catholics, it had seen combat in all the major battles fought in the eastern theater of the war without the spiritual comfort of the sacraments. Father Egan agreed to serve if the necessary ecclesiastical and civil authorizations were granted him.

With the approval of his superior, the Very Reverend Matthew A. O'Brien, and an official appointment by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts, Father Egan began his service as chaplain in March of 1864. In the ensuing months he shared the hardships and dangers of combat in all the regiment's engagements from the Battle of the Wilderness to the surrender at Appomattox.

Father Egan was the first of several priests from St. Dominic's who served as chaplains to American troops in wartime. Some are recent and present members of St. Dominic's community: Father James Muller, who

served with the Navy; Father John T. Carrigan, who served with the Army in World War II; Father Edward Gaffney, who served with the Army in Vietnam; and Father Robert D. Riley, who served with the Navy, also in Vietnam. †



Identified as "Ninth Massachusetts Infantry," worshippers in Union blue assemble for a sacred service around their priest, a simple altar and plain wooden cross at a "Camp near Washington, D.C."

By the time of the Civil War, the Catholic population of Southwest Washington had outgrown the original St. Dominic's Church building. That population continued to grow, swelled especially by the influx of immigrants fleeing Ireland's tragic potato famines. On April 10, 1865, the Dominicans met in council and voted to build a new church. After vespers on the following Sunday they presented the idea to a group of parishioners, who greeted it with enthusiasm and generosity. A fund of \$10,000 was soon raised.

In the fall of 1865, Andrew Johnson was president of the United States, the Most Reverend Martin Spalding was archbishop of Baltimore, Pius IX was pope, and the Reverend Nicholas D. Young was 75 years old and pastor of St. Dominic's. On Sunday, November 19, 1865, Father Young conducted ceremonies to lay the cornerstone for a new church, assisted by numerous Dominicans, along with several Jesuit fathers and Father McCarthy of St. Patrick's Church.

The next day the *National Intelligencer* described the "very large and imposing" ceremonies as follows:

The ceremonies commenced at 3 o'clock. At 2 o'clock the Sabbath schools of the various Catholic societies of the city were moving in the direction of the City Hall, in front of which they were marshalled [sic] together, proceeding thence in a body to the scene of the interesting ceremonies. The order

of the procession was as follows: 1st. St. Joseph's Beneficial Society (German) and St. Aloysius, belonging to St. Mary's German Church, numbering some 300, mostly young men, with two handsome drummers, and escorted by an excellent band. 2nd. St. Peter's (Capitol Hill) Sabbath School, numbering about 125 girls and 175 boys, with 10 male and 16 female teachers, all under the charge of their superintendent, Ida V. E. King. The school was marshalled [sic] under an elegant white and blue silk banner adorned with a live front and bearing upon the front a representation of St. Peter and the Keys; on the reverse the name of the school and date of its organization in 1840. 3rd. Sunday School of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, some 200 children with a fine banner. 4th. St. Aloysius's schools, embracing the Sunday School, day parochial school of boys, and the female school under the Sisters of Mercy, numbering in all 800. This was an imposing delegation... The sodality of the Immaculate Conception of St. Aloysius' Church, numbering 300 persons, followed with this delegation. 5th. St. Mary's Church, (Alexandria,) numbering 300 and St. Mary's Male Orphan Asylum 50 boys—an exceedingly interesting spectacle... The St. Matthew's and St. Patrick's Societies did not participate in the ceremonies, as unfortunately they were not notified in time for them to get their children in readiness... Long before the procession had reached the scene of the ceremonies, thousands had gathered to witness their arrival and to join with them in the occasion. ✚

New Growth, a New Church



Let It Be Gothic

The architect chosen to design the new St. Dominic's was Patrick C. Keely, and a more renowned talent could hardly have been found.

Born the son of an architect in Thurles, County Tipperary, in 1816, he left Ireland in 1842 to land in Brooklyn, New York, where he first found work as a carpenter before he could take up his real career. What a career it was: Keely designed sixteen Catholic cathedrals, including those in Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; and Hartford, Connecticut. In all, he built some 600 churches in the English Gothic style, a number of them for the Dominicans.

Keely was heavily influenced by the work of the British architect Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852). Pugin became a devout Catholic at the age of 24 and then championed the English Gothic tradition as the true ecclesiastical style. Keely, who attended Mass daily, evidently held to similar beliefs.

Reflecting Renaissance traditions of the 1400s, the interior of St. Dominic's would display many features such as pointed arches, intricate sculptures and extensive stained glass. The new building would face west, to capture the rising sun through the majestic St. Cecelia rose window and celebrate the beginning of each new day. The most striking exterior feature of Keely's design, the bell tower with its landmark spire, was

delayed by a depressed economy and would only be completed in 1888.

Keely would receive the second Laetare Medal, then as now the highest honor given to an American Catholic. The medal is awarded annually by the University of Notre Dame to a Catholic "whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity." +



A fine figure of a man, Patrick Keely was a prolific architect, but while many of his churches stand today, few of his plans survive as this empty space implies. A priestly historian of St. Joseph Province reports that many designs were discarded at the very institutions they depicted—by conscientious custodians in fits of good housekeeping! Earlier, the historian confides, Keely drew plans on sheets of linen, which frugal nuns laundered and recycled.



The New Church is Dedicated

Because of a severe economic depression following the Civil War, it took ten years to build the church. On Sunday, June 13, 1875, the feast of St. Anthony of Padua, Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley of Baltimore celebrated a Pontifical High Mass to dedicate the church in honor of St. Dominic. In reporting the “imposing dedicatory services,” the next day’s *Washington Tribune* described the church as “beyond doubt one of the largest, if not the largest and handsomest edifice of its kind south of New York, and is not surpassed, all things considered, by any in that city, of either the Catholic or Protestant denomination.”

The *Tribune* went on:

Yesterday was the day set for the dedication, and 10 o'clock the hour for the services to commence, but by 8 o'clock immense throngs, composed of the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the beauty and elite of the District, Alexandria, and Baltimore, commenced wending their way in the direction of the edifice, and by 9 o'clock the crowd on the sidewalks, both on Sixth and E streets, extended far into the streets. So great a crowd was expected that the officers of the church deemed it advisable to issue tickets of admission. At 9.45 o'clock the center door of the main entrance was thrown open, and those who were fortunate enough to hold tickets filed into the church, and those holding reserved-seat tickets were shown their respective seats by the ushers, who were attired in black coat and pants and white

vests, and wore on their left lapels a silver cross one and a half inches in length, with a pendant of blue ribbon, inscribed "Y.C.F.S. [Young Catholic Friends' Society] Washington, D.C."

The church has a seating capacity for two thousand persons, and not only was every seat occupied but a large number was compelled to stand. Among those in the vast audience was a number of distinguished army and navy officers, prominent Government officials both national and municipal, and a number of prominent private citizens

Grand pontifical vespers—evening prayers—were celebrated by Bishop Thomas L. Grace, O.P. of St. Paul, Minnesota, assisted by Father Sheridan, who served as sub-deacon and master of ceremonies; Father John A. Rotchford, provincial of the Dominican Province; Father John Bokel, deacon; and Father Charles Berotti. In the evening sermon, Bishop James Gibbons expressed admiration for the beautiful church and declared, with “faith we were able to accomplish great results.”

Noting that St. Dominic’s Church manifests the unity of the Catholic Church, the Bishop predicted, “There will be many immigrants come to the shores this country; many will pass through your city; they may be strangers and friendless, but they can look up to this spire that will undoubtedly soon rise to wear [sic] the heavens, and they can here find a place where they worship in the faith as they did before leaving their native land.” ✚

Barely ten years after the formal dedication of the church, a calamity befell St. Dominic's, causing awful damage and a crushing financial setback. On Thursday morning, March 12, 1885, a fire broke out in the church and was not quenched until it had destroyed the entire interior. The *Evening Star* reported that after 11 o'clock a young man named Florence McAuliffe was cleaning out the coal pit of the furnace.

He had a little while before putting a quantity of fresh coal in the boiler furnace, and to do this had removed a zinc shield which protected a wooden beam close to the furnace. McAuliffe carried down to the exit gate a quantity of refuse material and when he returned noticed that the wooden beam had caught fire from the overheated furnace. He endeavored to extinguish the flames, but he soon saw that his efforts were useless. He then informed the housekeeper, Kate Duffey, who directed him to have an alarm sounded...

When the firemen entered the building the priests and many of the parishioners were already at work removing the paintings, statues and sacred vessels, which were all saved... Although the building is of stone, it is lined with wood, and the space between the two materials formed innumerable flues, which aided the speed of the fire...

Many of the old parishioners were in tears as they stood expecting to see the demolition of the structure. There were exclamations of regret as one after another of the handsome

stained-glass windows were smashed into a thousand pieces. At 12 o'clock, when the fire was at its height, the hour of noon struck on the bell of the church, and the strokes, ordinarily unheeded, sounded like a solemn requiem... The chancel, where the altar had stood, the chapels on either side were perfect wrecks.

Over and around the grand altar, where nine stained-glass windows had stood, were nine empty window frames, through which one could look out upon the gray clouds. All of these windows were of French imported figures. The thirty-two foot high grand altar was totally destroyed. Assisted by the crowds that gathered firefighters managed to save most of the fixtures and stations, statues, vestments and sacred vessels.

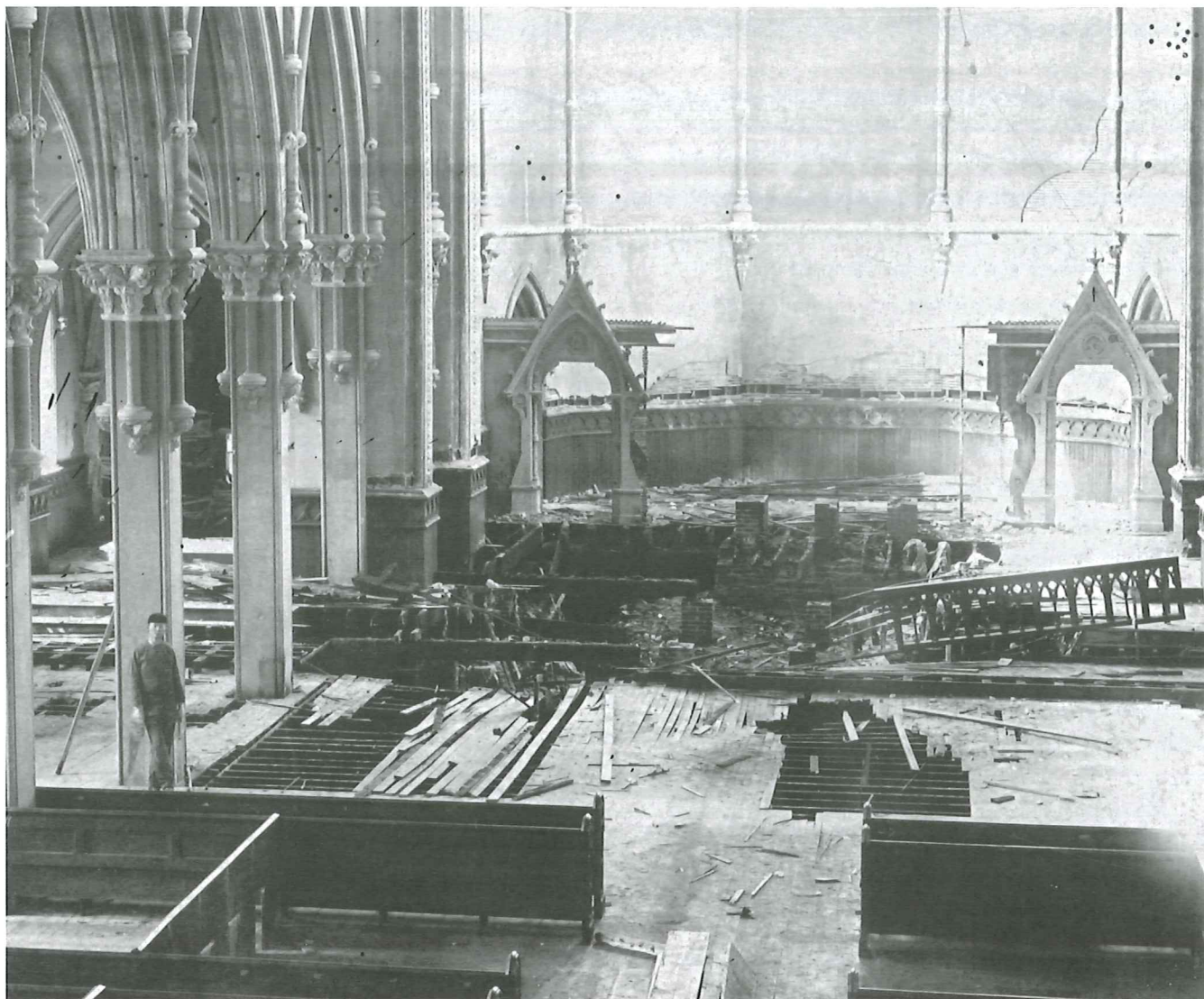
One of the windows destroyed was the magnificent rose window, twenty feet in diameter, over the front doors of the building. Firemen broke through it in their early efforts to reach the fire and extinguish the flames. The donor of the rose window, D. Cullinane, stood with tears streaming down his face as he watched the firemen destroy his gift. Fortunately he had the resources to replace it, and he donated a second rose window, the one that adorns the sanctuary today.

Insurance on the building amounted to \$30,000, while the damage was estimated at \$40,000. There was no insurance on the altars, vestments or furnishings. Catholics and non-Catholics joined the effort to refurbish the interior. Today, one small stained glass window

A Devastating Fire Renews the Parish

in the vestibule honors “The Little Girls” who sold oysters gathered from fishermen along the Potomac to raise funds for the reconstruction. Renovations, including splendid frescoes, an exquisite marble altar rail and baptismal font, were completed in a surprisingly short time and many parishioners deemed the new interior even more beautiful than the original. +

The smoke having cleared and dust settled, the magnificent interior of St. Dominic’s Church is a shambles of splintered wood and broken glass after the devastating fire of 1885. But it will rise again from these ashes...



Mrs. Sherman Donates a Window

Among the stained glass windows above the main altar, one portrays St. Joseph, the patron saint of the Eastern province of the Dominican Order.

This window was donated by Mrs. William Tecumseh Sherman, the wife of the Union Army general who in the Civil War won both fame and infamy, becoming a hero in the North and an anathema in Dixie.

General Sherman himself was not known to be a churchgoer, while historians describe Mrs. Sherman as being “very religious.” Ellen Ewing Sherman knew Dominican priests from her childhood in Lancaster, Ohio, and developed an admiration for them. The priests ministered to the Catholics at St. Mary’s in Lancaster, which was a Dominican mission of St. Joseph’s in Somerset.

Possibly Mrs. Sherman’s gift of the window was in honor of her son, Thomas Ewing Sherman, who became a Jesuit priest much to the surprise of many. The *Washington Post* once ran a feature on the young man, which reported:

His life reads like a romance...he was one of the most dashing and popular young men in Washington society. His father was General of the armies of the United States, and almost doted on the promising young man. A bright worldly future was before him. His uncle, the Senator, was to initiate him into politics, and soon, it was expected by his fond father,

the boy would be adding lustre to the Sherman name. He had graduated from the classical department of Georgetown College with the highest honors. He was handsome, manly, and apparently devoted to social pleasures.

There was even talk of his intended marriage to a young lady of Cincinnati. At this juncture however, when his parents and friends expected him to settle down and carve out a brilliant future, all the Washington world was shocked by the announcement that young Thomas had made up his mind to forsake the world, don the Jesuit cassock and take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. At first the report was ridiculed, as young Sherman had never shown any marked religious tendencies, but on the contrary had exhibited that spirit of religious indifference that characterizes the young men of the day.

The article carried the headline, “Gen. Sherman’s Jesuit Son: The General’s Sorrow on Account of His Son’s Course.” †



Ellen Ewing, the devout wife of the Union Army’s William Tecumseh Sherman, is remembered in glass only as “Mrs. Genl. Sherman.”

By the 1850s, the public school movement emerged as an essential component of American life, but conflict developed between the Catholic hierarchy and the public schools—especially over the issue of teaching the Protestant Bible in the classroom and using texts that were regarded as anti-Catholic. The controversy increased as more states passed compulsory school attendance laws and Catholic Church leaders became concerned about the “defects of public education.”

At the meeting of American Bishops in the First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852, the concept of parochial schools emerged as “indispensable to secure faith and morals among Catholic children.” Later, as part of his strong support for the concerns of immigrants, Archbishop Martin J. Spalding made parochial education a priority. Through his efforts, the Second Plenary Council in 1866 emphasized the indispensability of parochial schools, and at his direction every parish was required to support a school.

A turning point came in 1876 when the Vatican issued an “Instruction” to American bishops that spoke firmly against public schools and supported the need to establish Catholic schools. The instruction acknowledged that parents who sent their children to public schools might reasonably be denied the comforts of the sacraments. In 1884, the Third Plenary Council of

Baltimore issued decrees regarding: the founding of parochial schools; a pastor’s obligation in this matter; a congregation’s obligation to support such schools; and the obligation of parents to send their children to Catholic schools. The bishops ordered the building of a parochial school near each church within the next two years.

The Council also urged the writing of a uniform catechism that would set down the basic principles of the Catholic faith. This decision resulted in the popular Baltimore Catechism that American Catholic children would be required to commit to memory for generations—until the dramatic changes in liturgies and practice brought about by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

In the midst of the “schools controversy” between the Catholic hierarchy and public school authorities, a school and parish hall were built at St. Dominic’s; a convent for sisters who would teach at the new school was also erected at 439 Sixth Street SW.

From the outset, St. Dominic’s Parish gave priority to education, witness a school was established in the basement of the original church. When the new church opened in 1875, the original school expanded and used both floors of the old church until that building was torn down in 1886.

On October 20, 1886, a grand celebration of 2,000 people marked the opening of the school and

Parish Joins National Trend with a New School



Boys of St. Dominic's School stand for their picture circa 1915, flanked by a sister and a priest.

Our enclave at about the same time includes the church, the priests' house or rectory in the center, and the imposing school building.

parish hall. The *Washington Post* described the memorable event as a:

...grand sociable given under the auspices of the Holy Name and Young Catholics' Friend Societies, which notwithstanding the immense throng, was a pleasant and most enjoyable occasion. The hall was brilliantly lighted by large chandeliers hanging from the center and a profusion of jet brackets [gas lights] from the side walls. The decorations of the stage in the west end of the hall were composed of heavy draperies of flags and bunting, forming an alcove for the musicians. The program opened with a grand march, after which dancing was commenced and continued until an early hour this morning. ✚



Church property was generally held as tax exempt—until 1876, when such properties were placed on the tax rolls. Taxation of church property became a contentious issue, and the Baltimore diocese sued the District of Columbia, arguing that all church-owned property should be exempt.

On January 18, 1886, the United States Supreme Court in *Gibbons v. the District of Columbia* ruled against Archbishop Gibbons. The court held that the city could tax church property, and that it is within the power of Congress, acting as the local legislature of the District of Columbia, to tax different classes of property within the city at different rates.

After the Court ruled, Congress passed special legislation for “the relief of Saint Dominic’s Church in the District of Columbia.” Representative Storm who introduced the bill, attended St. Dominic’s. The act provided that St. Dominic’s would be “released and exempted from all taxes and assessments of any kind whatsoever heretofore at any time...” It further directed the Commissioners of the District of Columbia “to remit all taxes, penalties, and interest assessed and now due and unpaid on all...property which was used exclusively for religious and educational purposes.” President Cleveland signed the bill on March 3, 1887.

It wasn’t until the birth of the income tax in 1913 that churches became generally exempt from taxation.

As tax-exempt organizations under the Internal Revenue Code, churches and religious organizations became subject to certain limitations. For example, churches and clergy are prohibited from endorsing political candidates as a condition of tax-exempt status. +

President Cleveland Signs Special Legislation



The Roosevelt Organ

The Roosevelt clan of New York State, noted for producing two presidents, also produced two brothers whose fame in the world of music approached their kinsmen's celebrity in the wider world of politics. The brothers Hilborne and Frank Roosevelt operated the Roosevelt Organ Works from 1872 to 1893. Hilborne in particular is remembered as having made great advances in organ design and improved tonal quality, hallmarks of organ building in the early 20th century.

Born in 1849, nine years before his first cousin Theodore Roosevelt, Hilborne as a boy was fascinated with science, invention and electricity in particular. With a friend, he explored the interior of an organ that was being repaired at the Church of the Holy Communion in New York and was captivated. As soon as he was able, he became an apprentice in the Hall & Labagh factory that had built the instrument; thus he began to build and repair organs. This was not the illustrious career his family had envisioned for young Hilborne, although when an instrument he built won a gold medal at an industrial fair in 1869, opposition to his vocation diminished.

In 1872, Roosevelt went to England where he visited expert organ builders and studied their styles of design and methods of construction. Returning to New York, he opened his own factory, the Roosevelt Organ Works. Roosevelt's reputation grew quickly, but he

died at the age of 37. His brother Frank assumed management of the firm, and closed it in 1893 when he felt he could no longer maintain the standards that had been its hallmark for two decades. Within a short span of two decades the Roosevelts' organs had reached a position of excellence recognized throughout the music world.

In 1887 the Roosevelt Organ Works installed an organ in St. Dominic's Church, tuning it especially for the superb acoustics of its intended space. In terms of its musical quality, it is tonally unchanged more than a century later, thus being a rarity among the few surviving Roosevelt organs. This was originally a "tracker" organ, in which the keys are connected to pipes by a series of rods and levers so that striking a key mechanically opens a pipe to sound a note. In the 1920s, the original action was replaced by an electro-pneumatic action, in which the striking of keys sends electrical signals to open the pipes. About the time these changes were made, the pipes were reconfigured from a tall, narrow case to conform to the shape of the majestic Rose Window. That window shows Saint Cecilia, patron saint of music and musicians surrounded by six angels playing musical instruments—cymbals, viola, lute, trumpet and harps.

This magnificent Roosevelt Organ is the heart of music at St. Dominic's and the center of many important events. Throughout the years renowned organists

have drawn crowds for special concerts. Music offered at Dominican ordinations and during the holy seasons of Easter and Christmas occasionally features outstanding guest choirs, distinguished singers and trumpeters, as well as notable organists. +



The console of the Roosevelt Organ still stands in the choir loft above the rear of the nave.

Our Bell Rings

Delayed by the harsh realities of economics, the spire and its signal amenity were finally dedicated twenty-three years after the cornerstone was laid. That amenity is the great bronze bell, which was cast at the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore. Installation of the bell marked the completion of St. Dominic's Church.

Inscriptions on the bell prove its antiquity and tell the time of its origin. Named in bronze are:

Leo XIII, pope; William McKinley, President, U.S.; James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore; Fr. F.L. Kearney, O.P., Provincial of St. Joseph Province; Fr. J.P. Moran, O.P., Prior of St. Dominic; Fr. J.P. Valleley, O.P., Sub-Prior of St. Dominic; Fr. F.A. Spencer, O.P., Ex-Provincial; Fr. J.A. Bokel, O.P.; Fr. T.P. O'Rourke, O.P.; William Johnson, President of Holy Name Society; Mary A. O'Connor, President of Our Lady's Society; Margaret Travers, President of the Blessed Virgin Sodality; March, 1888.

The bell continues to ring throughout the neighborhood—to signal Sunday Masses and to sound the somber call for funerals. It rings at Easter, the greatest celebration for Christians, as well as to honor national moments of mourning and jubilation. Its beautiful sound resonates daily for the *Angelus* prayer at noon and at 6 P.M. as a reminder of God's help and protection. +



In the manner that Dominicans have tolled the hours for eight centuries, Brother Anthony rings in the new year of 1951. Then the bell still was rung by main strength by a friar who climbed stairs to a space outside the choir loft above the narthex; now an electrical mechanism on a timer does the work.

The ultimate blessing for a church—and a milestone for any parish—is the church's consecration. This was performed at St. Dominic's on October 12, 1919. In that era, canon law required that in order to be consecrated, a church had to be free from debt; so that no creditor could take over or repossess it. The fact remains that while many churches are dedicated, few are consecrated.

This consecration was an especially joyous occasion as the parish had run up large deficits for construction projects. In 1898 the Dominicans had borrowed \$35,000 from the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company at 4.5 percent interest. The church itself was obligated as collateral and a property lien was recorded. A release from the deed of trust, freeing the parish from all debt, was recorded on May 7, 1913.

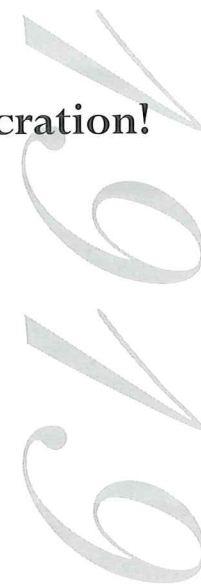
The consecration ceremonies continued over two days. On Friday, October 10, 1919, Bishop John T. McNicholas, O.P., Bishop of Duluth, performed the solemn rites of consecration. Saturday was given to spiritual celebration as a token of gratitude to God. Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, rector of The Catholic University of America in Northeast Washington, celebrated the solemn Pontifical Mass at 11 o'clock. His Eminence Cardinal James Gibbons presided.

As a consecrated church, St. Dominic's can never be used for anything but divine worship. Thus the sacred

status of the edifice is perpetual and the building would have to be demolished if the property were ever sold.

During the consecration services twelve white candles were placed along the north and south walls to symbolize the twelve apostles present at the Last Supper, at which Christ initiated the Eucharist. These candles are lit only once a year—for Midnight Mass each Christmas Eve when they glow brightly in commemoration of the generosity and support of the parishioners and friends of St. Dominic's. †

Consecration!





Our First Lady of the Stage and Screen: Helen Hayes

In 1900, Francis van Armum Brown and his wife, nee Catherine Estelle Hayes, welcomed their only child into the world in Southwest Washington, and in time the world of theater would thank them. The girl, Helen Hayes Brown, grew up on F Street Southwest and went to school at the Sacred Heart Academy at Eighth and C Streets, where she was taught by Dominican sisters. The Brown family belonged to St. Dominic's, and as a girl young Helen sang here as a member of the choir and soloist.

Helen Hayes Brown's father ran Auth's Meat Packing Co. at Seventh and D Streets; her mother took in washing so that the girl could get the best education and training. Her grandparents, Ann and Patrick Hayes, had left Ireland during the potato famines in the mid-19th century and settled in the neighborhood. It also bears mention that Helen's mother was the great-niece of the Irish singer Catherine Hayes; talent ran in the family.

As Helen Hayes, this child of St. Dominic's made her debut on Broadway at the age of 20, and went on to become the celebrated "First Lady of the American Stage" during a career that spanned six decades. Her Catholic faith was important to her and she was strongly influenced by her grandmother, as she explained in her autobiography. *My Life in Three Acts* also describes

how Sister Mary Eileen, a teacher at Sacred Heart Academy, became a lifelong friend. After she retired, "she used to come with another nun to see me at the theatre. They would have dinner out and then sit in the back, trying to be inconspicuous in their habits. It's not surprising that Roman Catholics can be theatre buffs, for there is a lot of drama in our church."


Many of Helen Hayes' plays, such as *Mary of Scotland* (1933), had religious themes. In 1931 she won her first Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in *The Sin of Madelene Claudet*. Throughout her career, she gave much time and money to charity, Catholic causes in particular. Helen particularly liked and drew great strength from working with the Dominican Father Gilbert V. Hartke, O.P. at The Catholic University across the city, where she coached acting classes and worked with students gratis. In part with her help and that of other devoted actors, directors and alumni, Father Hartke developed the University's Speech and Drama Department into one of the nation's most respected drama schools. One of her famous appearances at CU was in 1964, its diamond jubilee year, when *Good Morning, Miss Dove* was produced. This proved to be one of the most successful fundraising benefits the University ever held.

In 1972 the University of Notre Dame honored her with the Laetare Medal. Later, a collection of theatrical

awards was created to honor professional thespians in Washington's theater community. The aptly named Helen Hayes Awards are to Washington what the Oscars are to Hollywood. +



St. Dominic's choir girl and soloist, the young Helen Hayes displays the shy beauty that would become her hallmark as the first lady of American stage and screen.



From Our Stage to Off-Broadway

St. Dominic's pastor in the early 1930s, Father Raphael M. Burke, O.P., loved both God and theater; likewise his friend, Brother Urban Nagle, who would introduce Catholic theater into American life. A seminarian studying at the Dominican House of Studies in 1929, Brother Urban wrote an original Passion play, *Barter*, and Father Burke asked the prior of the House of Studies for permission to produce it as a Lenten offering in St. Dominic's spacious auditorium. The production was an immediate hit that drew large audiences to St. Dominic's Hall that year—and for some years running it was presented each Lenten season.

Having been ordained in 1931, now Father Urban Nagle, O.P., and his seminary classmate Father Fabian Carey, O.P., founded the Blackfriars' Institute of Dramatic Art, a summer program for actors, directors and designers at The Catholic University. They named it after the Dominican Blackfriars' Theater in England where members of the Order came to be known as Blackfriars for their black mantles or "cappas," which they wore over their white habits when they went outside or preached.


After running the training program for three summers, in 1940, Fathers Nagle and Carey ventured to New York City where they rented a small auditorium, formerly a YMCA, on West 57th Street and premiered the Blackfriars Guild productions. This was probably

the first professional theater conducted by a Catholic organization, possibly the first religious theater for the general public in New York City, and almost certainly the most successful theater of its kind. It produced plays during September and Lent for thirty-two years, becoming a singularly important theater movement through which the Church spread its teaching. Memorable productions included *The King's Standards*, an account of the worker priest movement; *Bamboo Cross*, the story of Maryknoll Sisters persecuted in China; *La Madre*, a bio-drama of St. Theresa of Avila; and *And the Devil Makes Five* in which a man contacts Satan to beg compassion for humanity as the world teeters on the brink of nuclear war.

Back in Washington at The Catholic University, the Blackfriars summer institute led to the creation of the Speech and Drama Department, which the Dominican priest and teacher Father Hartke headed for more than thirty years, and which quickly won the support of talented professionals like our own Helen Hayes. And just as she is immortalized in the Helen Hayes Awards, the pedagogue is remembered in the Gilbert V. Hartke Theater at the university. †

Friars at the House of Studies dramatize The Beginning of the Gospel, a passion play in 1985, five decades after the first Lenten drama was offered at St. Dominic's.





Offertory Envelopes Prove Their Worth

The 1929 stock market crash led to the longest and deepest depression in American history. Businesses went bankrupt, banks failed; for more than a decade, just about the only growth industries were unemployment offices and soup lines. At St. Dominic's and every other church from sea to shining sea, some self-respecting parishioners found themselves out of work for the first time in their lives and, having given to charity since childhood, faced the humbling experience of seeking charity themselves.

Those whose jobs continued—government workers among them—brought clothes and food to St. Dominic's Church, where they were parceled out to people in need. On a larger scale, the Catholic Charities organization, which had been founded three decades earlier to find homes for needy children, grew to become a leader in general social welfare programs.

In the midst of the Great Depression, which brought virtually the entire industrialized world to its knees, Pope Pius XI issued his encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* subtitled *On the Reconstruction of the Social Order*. The term "social justice" first appeared in Catholic teaching with this encyclical of 1931, which emphasized that justice should focus on the common good and the search for justice should govern the social and political policies of all nations.

By 1933, some thirteen million Americans were out of work. While Washington was not hit as hard as the rest of the country, this depression devastated many families in Southwest Washington, where a high proportion of residents were poor. By 1933 revenue in many diocesan parishes fell 25 to 30 percent, while St. Dominic's receipts plummeted 62 percent.

St. Dominic's experienced hard financial times even though its congregation grew. In 1930 parish revenue was \$71,818; in 1931 it was \$64,797, and so on, as the Depression deepened and with it the financial straits of people and churches everywhere. Yet the number of parishioners at St. Dominic's increased from 1,823 in 1930 to 2,024 in 1933, and the number of school children from 325 to 388.

Since pew rents were not providing sufficient income, in 1933 Bishop Michael Curley of Baltimore directed all parishes to initiate the use of offertory envelopes. Each parishioner or family who made a pledge received a supply of these specially printed envelopes, which were to be used for the offertory each week. About the same time, St. Dominic's newsletter began to report parishioners' actual contributions week by week. Around 1934, collections began to rise again. The campaign was working. ✚

The parish carnival and parade through Southwest Washington became a substantial source of revenue for St. Dominic's during the Depression. In 1936 more than 5,000 spectators lined streets to witness the colorful cavalcade that opened the annual St. Dominic's Church Carnival. The parade, with 1,200 persons participating, began at the church on Sixth Street, marched north to Maryland Avenue, east to Fourth Street, south to I Street, west to Sixth Street and back to the carnival grounds. Children decorated their bicycles and dads their automobiles to join the procession. Featured marchers wore the colorful costumes of many nations. Bands from the Metropolitan Police Boys' Club, Elks Boys' Club, Knights of Columbus and Sons of the American Legion all took part.

Year by year the celebration grew in size with the number of bands and floats increasing. Prizes were awarded for the best decorated scooters, wagons, bikes and baby carriages, the most original and funniest costumes. In 1937 Walter Johnson, former ace pitcher of the Washington Senators was the headliner. In 1938 Steve Manakos, the local welterweight boxer, appeared.

One news account noted that:

The spirit of gaiety will be enlivened by children and grownups in costume and by decorated vehicles of every description from the smallest scooter to the largest truck.... Nothing

has been left undone to furnish enjoyable pastime for all who attend the Carnival. Kiddies can enjoy their rides, eat popcorn, play games and watch the funny things that take place. Adults who are flight-minded, may take to the Ferris Wheel; strong men can knock the bell of the high-striker; Dizzy Deans can knock down milk bottles; everyone may find amusement. +



Sated with treats and visual wonders, goggle-eyed boys stare at the camera from their merry-go-round chariot in 1938, during the Great Depression when the annual Parade and Carnival was a major source of St. Dominic's income.

Carnival Unites Community

*The hobo and the nurse vie for honors
in the annual Parade.*



After Police Inspector Albert J. Headley died of a heart attack at the age of 67 at his home, 217 Ninth Street SW, a Requiem Mass was sung for him at St. Dominic's. This member of the parish had been assistant superintendent of the Metropolitan Police Department and spent thirty-nine years in uniform.

A rookie cop in 1896, Officer Headley walked a beat in the old Southwest, then known as "Bloodfield" because this part of town was rundown and ridden with crime. Officer Headley won a commendation for arresting a murderer. He became known as "Bird-eye" in the neighborhood because some superstitious citizens believed that he had "eyes in the back of his head." He was made a bicycle officer in 1901 and a year later acting sergeant. He was promoted to sergeant, lieutenant, then captain, and in 1923 became head of the Traffic Bureau. In that position Headley wrote Washington's traffic regulations and designed traffic signs.

Among the first to realize the magnitude of Washington's growing traffic problems, he recruited the first city-wide traffic squad, instituted the resident parking permit system and suggested underground parking for the National Mall. Perhaps of most lasting importance, he instituted the first one-way streets. It was also on his watch that Washington got traffic lights.

Surely our Officer Headley was a pioneer. +



The Man Who Changed the Traffic



A Sanctuary for Ordination

The Dominican seminary (also called *studium*) moved in 1905 from Somerset, Ohio, to a site facing the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and The Catholic University in Washington. Thereafter the annual ordination of priests for St. Joseph's Province became a popular celebration at St. Dominic's Church. The move of the training center for Dominican priests, today known as the Dominican House of Studies, conformed with the Order's long practice of establishing its houses of study in major university settings.

Then as now, priests throughout the northeastern United States and around the country traveled to Washington to join in the laying on of hands for new priests. Held every May, Dominican ordinations were grand celebrations for friends and relatives. Children were released from St. Dominic's School to attend the moving ceremonies.

Many priests from the class of 1938—the largest Dominican ordination class in history—became missionaries both at home and abroad. Some served in foreign missions expanding into China, Australia and Brazil; others served on missions and retreats throughout the United States. Most were assigned as parish priests and pastors. Before the days of television, many missions at St. Dominic's drew hundreds of people.

Likewise, some altar servers who attended St. Dominic's School became Dominican priests. That

largest class of 1938 included Father Louis A. Springmann, O.P., a native of St. Dominic's parish, who liked to tell stories about St. Dominic's. One favorite tale that fellow priests like to tell about him was how someone once talked him into climbing up into the bell tower. He had a touch of vertigo and couldn't come down, so they had to call the firemen to take him down.

Sad to say, the number of men ordained to priesthood since 1938 has steadily declined. The silver lining in this is that lay people are taking more of the leading roles in parish ministry, decision-making, outreach and liturgy. +

Dominicans are ordained priests before the resplendent high altar. Men of the Dominican Order sit together on the left and sisters in black veils on the right. High behind the altar shine windows depicting the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and St. Joseph. Those windows remain today as beautiful aids to reverence and contemplation, although the ornate gothic altar has been replaced by a table altar in keeping with the liberalizing mandates of the Second Vatican Council.





Sports Lead the Way to Social Justice

As it was felt that nearby Catholic high schools were expensive while public schools offered narrow curricula, St. Dominic's started a high school in 1939. Under the direction of Father William D. Marrin, O.P., in the first year the school was open only to freshmen who took conventional classes and a commercial course. This arrangement continued until 1948 when Father Bernard P. Shaffer, O.P., added the second and third year to the course. When the parish celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1952, the pastor, Father Andrew M. Whelan, O.P., added a senior program to complete the full high school curriculum for young people in the parish.

Almost from the start, basketball was popular at the school. A turning point came in 1949 when the boys intermediate team won the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) City Championship by defeating St. Joseph's and bringing home a trophy. Much credit went to the priests who coached them. With emphasis on "the spirit to win and the grace to lose," St. Dominic's usually played against junior varsity teams because with only eight or ten playing a sport, it lacked the size to compete with the big schools such as Gonzaga and DeMatha.

Shooting hoops outside of school became popular among boys and girls alike, whether in the priests' yard or at the Nye Council House, the Jewish community center at Eighth and F Streets SW and a popular hang-

out for all neighborhood children. Successful in "keeping the kids off the streets," the renovated mansion had a large basketball court as well as an elegant yard with beautiful gardens. Popular for Friday night teen-age dances, the center would be demolished during urban renewal leaving Southwest teenagers without a good place to congregate.

Over the years, parish basketball reflected the social issues of the day—such as initiating teams for girls and racially integrated teams. Although the girls' teams ended their first year with a losing streak, they always participated in diocese league playoffs. The girls' varsity, launched in 1953, evolved into parish superstars. As the St. Dominic's High School yearbook boasted, "Norma Schlorb and Regina Thompson are two of the finest players to be found anywhere. They possess all the qualities of good basketball players: speed, courage, and skill."

During the era of racial segregation, Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle, the archbishop of Washington, took a giant step toward social justice by ordering the integration of all Catholic schools and school activities. Because progressive edicts by bishops elsewhere had stirred up opposition, O'Boyle designed a plan for a "gradual but progressive integration" of Washington's Catholic schools—before the public schools were integrated.

One aspect of this plan included having basketball teams integrated and playing diverse opponents.

O'Boyle could rely on the active cooperation of the Dominican priests and sisters, as St. Dominic's was one of the parishes situated in a predominantly black neighborhood. Children from other predominantly black parishes, such as Holy Comforter in northeast Washington, came to play at St. Dominic's, and the sports program attracted many African-American children to the parish.

Today all the parish's activities display a broad spectrum of ethnic composition. As a friar recently assigned here remarked after his first Sunday Mass, "The congregation looks like the United Nations." ✚

The Very Reverend Father Whelan sports a mortarboard during his pastorate here.

Below, Jean Thompson, identified on the back of the snapshot as a forward, sets her sights high in 1953.





Supreme Court Upholds Urban Renewal

In the early 1900s Southwest Washington became run-down, dirty and dangerous, in short a slum. The quadrant's endemic problems were only worsened by external pressures. Federal agencies competed for scarce space and crowded out residential neighborhoods with their shops and small businesses. These changes in turn made the area less desirable for those residents who could afford to move elsewhere; they left and in so doing further destabilized the neighborhood, and thus a cycle accelerated.

In 1920 the population fell to 32,000, and before the next census one-fourth of those people left. In 1930 Federal authorities designated the Southwest as "blighted" because of its desolated dwellings and high crime. In 1945 Congress passed the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act, which established the D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), which was mandated to replan, then rebuild blighted areas of the District of Columbia. Thus began the process of "urban renewal." Congress chose Southwest Washington to be its first national laboratory.

Urban renewal in Southwest did not begin without a court fight, one that went all the way to the Supreme Court. The case challenged Congress' authority to designate the first sixteen-block slum clearance project and rebuild Southwest Washington under urban renewal.

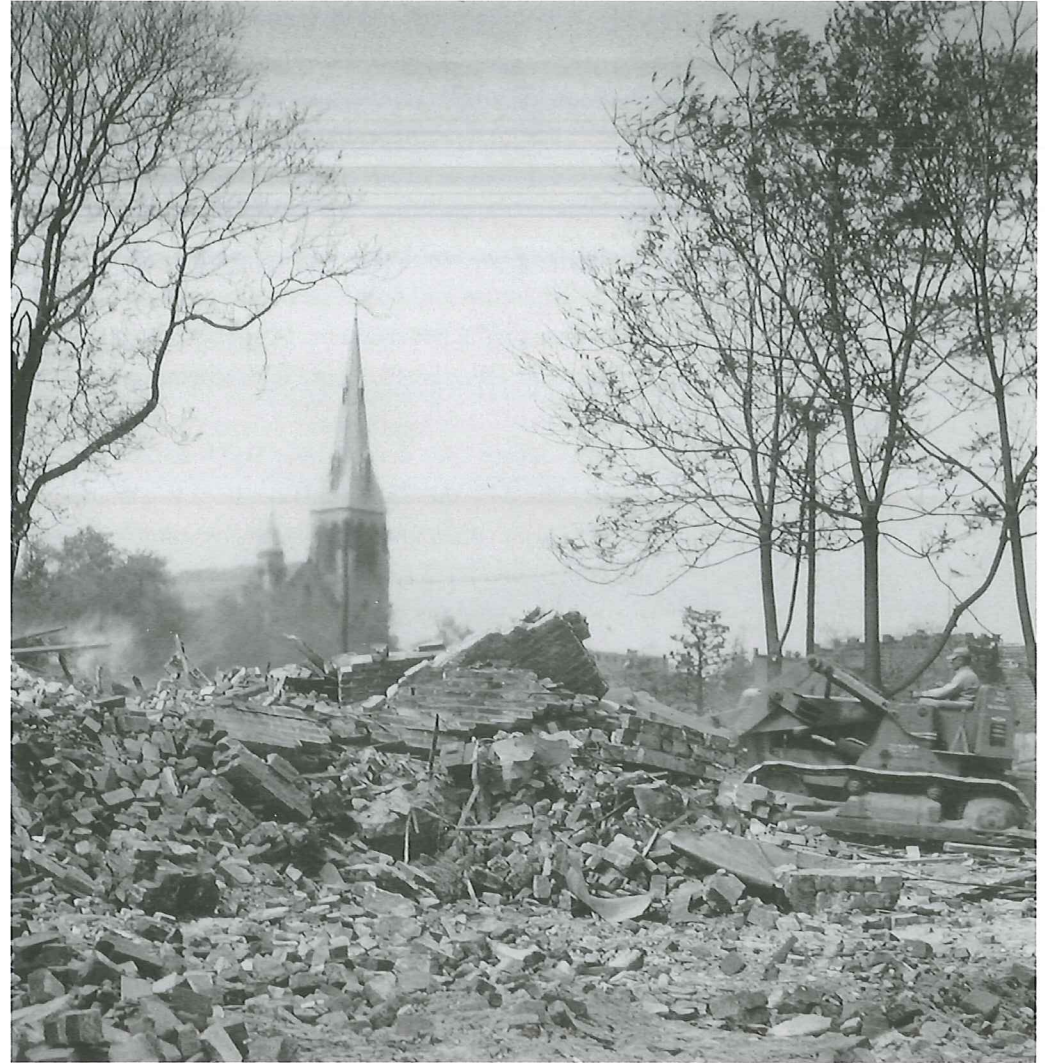
The lawsuit was brought by Goldie Schneider who owned the hardware store at 716 Fourth Street SW. Her case, which proved to be a landmark, challenged Congressional authority to declare entire community areas (rather than individual structures) as "blighted" and therefore eligible for demolition "in the public interest." Attorney Joseph H. Schneider, Goldie's son and president of the Southwest Businessmen's Association, was the lead attorney throughout the litigation. Still, Goldie Schneider lost.


The Supreme Court upheld RLA's right to take full title to the land, declaring that it is not the function of courts to pick and choose among various parcels selected for condemnation. In 1954, a unanimous opinion written by Justice William O. Douglas in *Berman v. Parker*, held that the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945 was constitutional.

The court declared that not only homes and businesses, but also churches, schools, parks, streets and shopping centers could be slated for demolition in a designated "blighted area." Justice Douglas wrote that it was important to "redesign the whole area as to eliminate the conditions that cause slums—the overcrowding of dwellings, the lack of parks, the lack of adequate streets and alleys, the absence of recreational areas, the lack of light and air, the presence of outmoded street patterns."

After this ruling, the plan to invoke eminent domain and demolish homes, businesses, streets and churches went forward. St. Dominic's Parish would never be the same, indeed its old rectory, convent and school would cease to be. †

The policy called urban renewal lays waste to much of Southwest Washington after Congress picked this section of the city to be a pilot project for the entire nation. The plan was launched in 1945, then delayed by legal wrangling until the Supreme Court upheld the law in 1954, when bulldozers and wreckers begin to invade the neighborhood. They level much of St Dominic's parish, including the school and rectory; only the church itself will be spared.





Demolition Looms... The Church Is Saved

More than 4,000 families in Southwest Washington would be uprooted and displaced as their homes were demolished in the nation's first experiment in urban renewal after the 1954 Supreme Court decision. The process proved to be painful, litigious and long—lasting from 1945 through 1960—as homes and businesses were condemned and taken over by the government. Property owners and government officials alike were consumed in the process.

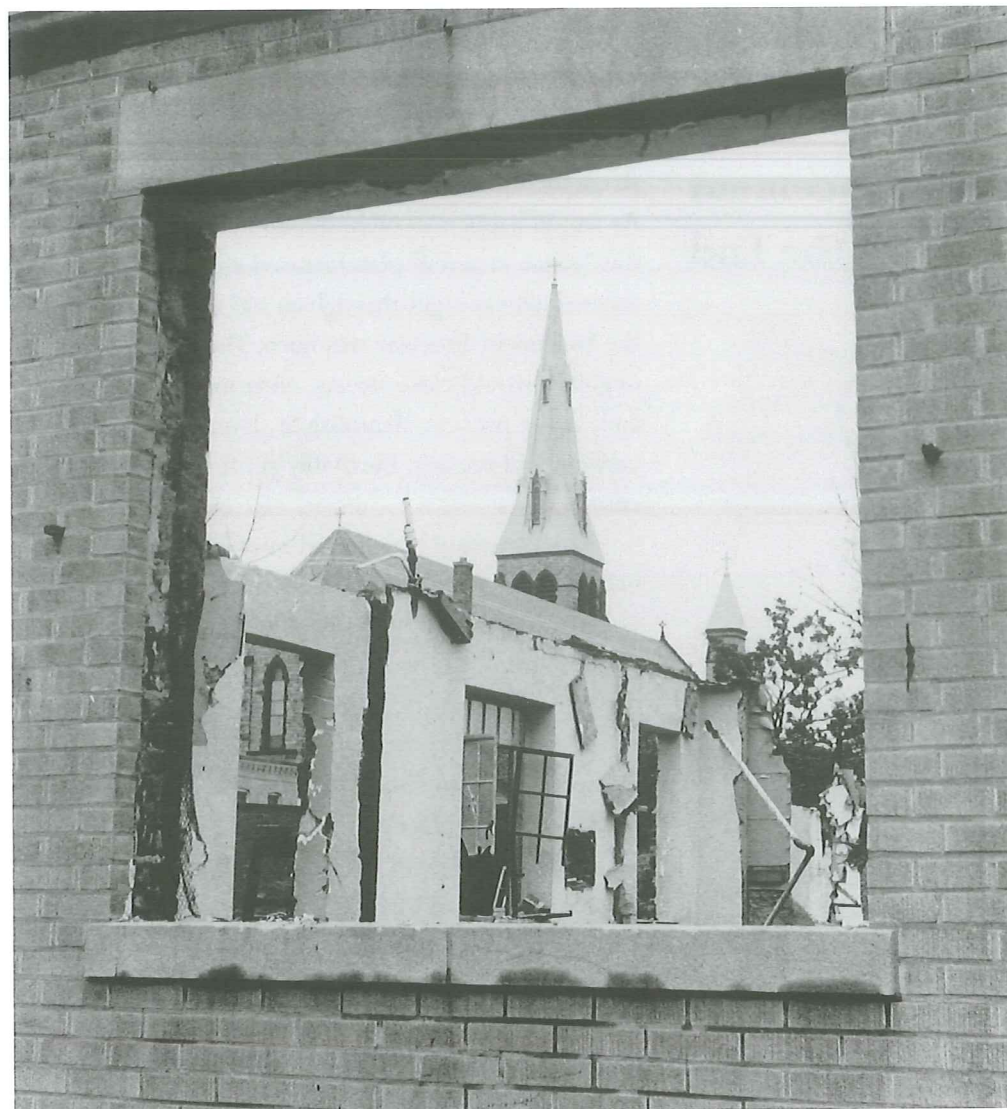
The debate over demolishing St. Dominic's property was joined by the Catholic Diocese of Washington, which fought vehemently to save St. Dominic's Church and threatened legal action if sufficient reimbursement was not provided for parish buildings that would be demolished. In particular, the Most Reverend Philip M. Hannon, diocesan chancellor and the only religious representative named to the powerful Federal City Council, took the issue as an affront to the Catholic Church of Washington; he would barely tolerate discussion of the matter as legitimate. Hannon was a native Washingtonian with many friends in Congress.


The strategy adopted by the Council, which had practical influence over RLA, was that planners and builders would keep working until all reasonable objections were ironed out and urban renewal could go forward with the support of most of the community. An

important element in the mix was that St. Dominic's had strong support on Capitol Hill; some members of Congress and staffers alike attended services here regularly.

In 1957, U.S. Representative Aime J. Forand, a Democrat from Rhode Island, introduced a bill to amend the parish's 1856 charter, which had set the limit of \$500,000 on the value of property that St. Dominic's could hold. In effect, this would enable the Church (through its civil corporation, the St. Thomas Literary Society) to accept a price more in keeping with the actual market value of its prime property in an area that would become more valuable after urban renewal. The bill, which was passed into law, also permitted the church to erect new buildings in the future. +

A partial ruin remains pro tem as St. Dominic's priests' house, the school and everything south and west of the church are removed so that the Southwest Expressway and its access roads can fill the land these buildings occupied.





When Commencement Meant the End

By 1950, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission issued a comprehensive plan of thoroughfares intended to improve traffic flow, strengthen the economy and increase property values. As would happen so often in cities across America, this “urban renewal” plan featured a high-speed limited-access highway right through an old neighborhood, thus the Southwest Freeway was born. The proposed thoroughfare would close streets, clear private structures and, in the process, demolish St. Dominic’s school, convent and rectory. Inevitably yet fortunately, a debate ensued.

The controversy centered on where a ramp was necessary to make the street serve Southwest directly as Federal and local highway officials computed “needed road capacity.” Known as the downtown inner loop, the freeway would have four traffic lanes each way and would run directly through St. Dominic’s School at the corner of F and Sixth Streets. Thus, urban renewal marked the end of an era. For many decades the school served as a focal point for parish activities—children’s Masses, the annual carnival, plays and recitals, piano lessons, basketball, the band. Dominican sisters taught religion, respected high academic standards and instilled discipline. In 1957 that focal point disappeared. The Redevelopment Land Agency condemned the school under eminent domain to build the freeway.

Alumni recall that the last graduation was exceptionally sad. As one said years later, “not only were you not coming back, but no one else was coming back either.” A dinner for the graduates and their parents the night before graduation was a bitter-sweet event. Then at 8 P.M., Friday, June 14, 1957, the organ played *Pomp and Circumstance* and thirty-two 8th graders dressed in royal blue caps and gowns walked in procession down the middle isle to the front of the church and sat in the first pews.


Father F. X. Finnegan, O.P., pastor of the parish, conferred the diplomas. Awards to distinguished graduates included gold medals for general excellence, for Christian doctrine and for perfect attendance. In previous years, awards included a scholarship to Sacred Heart Academy, at Eighth and C Streets SW, but because it was to be demolished as well, no high school scholarship was awarded that year. The program listed the class colors as blue and white, the class prayer as the *Memorare*, and the class motto as *Veritas* (Truth), which is also the motto of the Dominican Order.

The last graduation also marked the end of an era for Dominican sisters in the parish. In that academic year, fourteen Dominican Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary, from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, taught at St. Dominic’s School and resided in the convent down the street at 515 Sixth Street SW. After the sisters left, to be assigned to other ministries, the convent became a

temporary home for priests until a new priory could be built, as the priests' house was also demolished. St. Dominic's School became one of the first buildings to be demolished in Southwest Washington's Urban Renewal. †



St. Dominic's School began with elementary classes, extended its range in spurts and graduated its first senior class only in 1953—and its last in 1957. During those years, the school remained a vibrant community center; witness the Washington Music Guild donates a juke box in 1956. Sister Mary Clare, the school principal, accepts the gift from the city's "Mr. Radio," Eddie Gallaher of WTOP, while students and the Guild president look on.



The Priory Is Razed; Let Us Raise the Priory

The stated objective of urban renewal was “to re-establish Southwest Washington, as a major physical and economic asset in the City of Washington, appropriate to the National Capital.” The program accomplished that by building “the new” Southwest, but at the terrible price of destroying “the old” and displacing thousands of families. It also brought a metamorphosis for St. Dominic’s.

Armed with the power of eminent domain to take over private property at wholesale prices, the Redevelopment Land Agency condemned thousands of homes and other buildings, including St. Dominic’s school, priory and convent. Then the agency razed the structures, leveling block after block of old urban landscape. The historic church building itself was saved from wrecking; under urban renewal, churches were deemed essential “community” assets (even so, some were demolished).

For people whose homes were taken, urban renewal meant emotional trauma and financial disaster. Once a family received a condemnation notice they had sixty days to vacate and find a new home with the help of government counselors. Nor were they offered anything like what the government paid landowners when it first acquired land here. The Residence Act of 1790 mandated payment of twice the market value of property acquired to build the new capital city in the 1800s.

In the 1950s, few families received even half of their home’s value, and the notion of “future value” was never considered.

In clearing the area, RLA destroyed many homes that were dilapidated or worse as well as many architectural classics in various states of repair, some of them beautifully maintained. Inevitably the condemnation of homes, whether modest or grand, sparked personal tragedies and fueled social tensions. Residents of the old neighborhoods, many of them African-American, were displaced; black or white, few displaced residents could afford to return to the chic and pricey “new” Southwest. Witness the family living in the period townhouse at 630 E Street SW, the same address as St. Dominic’s Priory today. In 1958, RLA condemned and paid a paltry \$16,000 for that three-story brick home which had eleven rooms, three baths, basement and two-story two-car garage.

The Dominicans in residence at St. Dominic’s were displaced temporarily, but at least their church survived and they were able to return to modern quarters in due time, albeit in an entirely different environment. After the neighborhood was leveled and the dust had settled, the Order built a forty-room residence with a chapel for the priests and brothers. The groundbreaking occurred on December 16, 1960, when Bishop Philip M. Hannan, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, who had defended St.

Dominic's Church earlier, praised the Order for its role in the development of Southwest Washington.

The new four-story priory replaced the building at 439 Sixth Street SW, which the Dominicans had leased when the old priory at 515 Sixth Street SW was demolished. An arched section connecting the priory to the church, would house a modern chapel for the priests and brothers, while the addition itself provided living quarters, a library, and guest rooms. The entire third floor now houses the Center for Assisted Living where Dominicans of the Province receive the special health care some require in their latter years. The new annex, which Bishop O'Boyle blessed in ceremonies on June 7, 1962, also includes expanded facilities for parish offices, and a basement meeting room that provides a place for lectures, meetings, parish dinners, celebrations, fellowship and social events.

Perhaps more important than the new building in the larger scheme of things was the change in our church's community and congregation. Most of the resident members of St. Dominic's old congregation moved and found spiritual homes where they settled. Consequently the Dominicans began receiving a new congregation composed of a few old members (now "Sunday commuters" driving from their new homes) and many new residents of the new Southwest's apartment blocks, condos and pricey townhouses. Simultaneously, as the

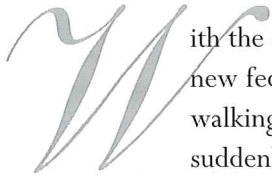
area became dominated by huge government office buildings, St. Dominic's gained an entirely new weekday congregation, a community of white-collar professionals and civil servants seeking work-week worship. +



The silver lining of urban renewal is the fact that wholesale demolition clears the way for new building. In December of 1960, the prior, the Very Reverend John A. Nowlen, O.P., and Auxiliary Bishop Philip M. Hannan break ground for the handsome new priory (overleaf).

Given the new configuration of real estate, this adjunct arises immediately west of the old church so that St. Dominic's will fill all that remains of the 600 block of E Street SW.





With the construction and opening of new federal office buildings within walking distance, St. Dominic's quite suddenly found itself serving a new congregation at new hours. Hundreds of Federal workers—from cabinet officers to clerks—participate in morning and noontime Masses on weekdays.

Since the parish's founding, officials from all branches of government have come to St. Dominic's to nourish mind and spirit. The church inspires meditation and reflection, the occasion to think about personal hopes, dreams and tragedies. In particular the church inspires these "weekday parishioners" to reflect on how their daily lives blend with their vocations as Christians. St. Dominic's has long provided a haven to weather the political tides breaking around the parish—presidential transitions, Congressional elections, declarations of war and the welcome news of ceasefire, armistice and peace.

Passage of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, creating HUD as a cabinet-level agency, marked the beginning of a dramatic increase of Federal workers in the parish neighborhood, replacing families displaced by urban renewal. The ten-story HUD building, accommodating 4,000 workers on Seventh Street, fulfilled President John F. Kennedy's directives to improve the quality of public building design. Then Congress established the Department of

Transportation on October 15, 1966, and the ten-story DOT building, accommodating 5,500 workers, opened across E Street. Immediately to the east of the church, across Sixth Street, stands the new headquarters of the U.S. International Trade Commission, an independent, quasi-judicial Federal agency created by the Trade Act of 1974.

Today, over 50,000 Federal employees work in six cabinet-level departments and other Federal agencies located within four blocks of the church. These include the Departments of Energy, Education, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services; Federal Emergency Management Agency, Small Business Administration, General Services Administration, National Air and Space Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Information Agency, and Voice of America. As it happens, many of these nearby agencies deal with social justice—a key element of Christian outreach—such as providing emergency disaster assistance, upgrading the nation's housing, administering trade policy, or providing education for the poor.

When the L'Enfant Plaza Metro station opened in 1977, St. Dominic's became the only Catholic church located immediately at a subway stop in the nation's capital—hence attracting many workers even from beyond walking distance. Regular weekday Masses are scheduled to accommodate the thousands of Federal workers in the vicinity. Then, of course, additional



A Sacred Space for Federal Workers

services are scheduled for such occasions as Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter and other holy days of obligation. In addition, at times of national tragedy or crisis—as when the Challenger space vehicle exploded or terrorists struck on September 11, 2001—the pas-

tor may hold a service almost spontaneously. Typically these services fill the church and some worshippers must stand outside. +

On three sides of St. Dominic's rises a new government center within the capital, an imposing complex that includes the Department of Housing and Urban Development (right), Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Small Business Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Communications Commission and many more. Today, some 50,000 federal employees fill offices within four blocks of St. Dominic's—many of them members of the church's "weekday congregation."



Lyndon Baines Johnson discovered St. Dominic's and found comfort here as the controversy over his policies escalated during the increasingly costly and tragic war in Vietnam. Reporters took note of the president's frequent visits to St. Dominic's and some speculated that he might convert after his daughter, Luci Baines, became a Catholic in 1965. Others thought that his drawing closer to Catholicism was a result of the intense moral and political pressures brought by the war in Southeast Asia.

Whatever his motivations, the president publicly stated that he drew strength from this church. Beginning in 1966, he returned for quiet reflection from time to time. Priests and brothers arranged special prayer services for him in the chapel adjacent to the church on these occasions. Only President Johnson, a Secret Service detail and a couple of the clergy would be present during these late night visits.

Johnson's most momentous visit to St. Dominic's came hours after he ordered American bombers to strike oil facilities in North Vietnam for the first time. A feature in *U.S. News & World Report* noted,

It was the stormy night of June 28 last year [1966]. The President had decided that the U.S. must attack the oil-storage facilities at Haiphong, North Vietnam, and had ordered U.S. bombers in for the first strike. As the hours passed slowly before

the air attack, the President considered all the things that could go wrong. Pilots might bomb the wrong target, maybe a Russian ship, maybe a civilian area. Could Air Force and Navy planes get through? How many American men would die?...

The agony of the decision was apparent in his face. Luci noticed that the President was troubled, and asked if she could help. . . . Luci explained that when she had worries she went to what she calls her 'little monks' at St. Dominic's Catholic Church in Southwest Washington and prayed. She suggested that, although it was late, he do the same.

Pat Nugent, her fiancé, telephoned the church and asked if he and Luci Baines could make a visit. The news story went on:

It was after 10 p.m. A limousine was called. The President and Mrs. Johnson, Luci Johnson and Mr. Nugent and a handful of Secret Service men drove through the rain to the church. They were met by Brother Fabian Butler, a friar in the Dominican Order of Preachers. He had not expected the President and Mrs. Johnson.

The presidential party walked up the aisle in the dimly lit church to a pew in the front and knelt in silent prayer. The attending Secret Service men remained in the rear. After a few minutes, Mr. Nugent asked Brother Fabian to say a special prayer for the President. When that prayer ended, there was a long silence. . . . That night the President did not go to bed until the news of the attack was relayed to him. Finally, the

President Johnson Prays at St. Dominic's

word came. There had been no miscalculations. The mission had been a success. Only one American plane had gone down, and its pilot was to be rescued. †

Among the federal personnel who have worshipped at St. Dominic's are uncounted congressmen, senators and members of the executive branch who come here for contemplation or comfort, whether regularly or just from time to time. President Lyndon Johnson became a frequent visitor for late-night private prayers when he shared the nation's torment over the Vietnam War, which he felt he had the tragic duty to pursue. Accompanied by his son-in-law and daughter Luci, a Catholic convert, he comes as well in the bright sunshine of Palm Sunday 1968, which is also a day of mourning for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights leader martyred days before. Thus he receives palms from Father T. G. Mullaney, O.P.



AUSTIN, TEXAS

Dear Brother Butler:

In looking through my mail a second time, I came across the card you so kindly sent my family.

We will always remember Saint Dominic's with appreciation and pleasure and I hope you will convey our best wishes to our friends there.

Sincerely,

Brother Fabian Butler, O.P.
Saint Dominic's Priory
Washington, D. C.

February 24, 1969

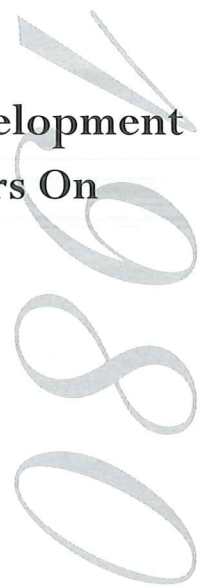
After the RLA demolished St. Dominic's School to build the Southwest Freeway, planners provided space for another school in the 600 block of Seventh Street, "Parcel 76" (bounded by the Freeway on the north, G Street on the south, Seventh Street on the east, and Ninth Street on the west). When it became apparent that the demographics of the parish could no longer support an elementary school, the request was made to the RLA that low-income housing be substituted in its place.

Known as "Plan Modification 22," the proposal would change the use of Parcel 76 from church or parochial school to use for up to 200 apartment units for low- or moderate-income families. Many home owners and business leaders objected to the proposal. Nevertheless, the City Council approved the modification for low-income housing. The issue of consent by surrounding property owners went to Federal Court. A few local residents and business owners sued the RLA, claiming that the agency was required to obtain the consent of landowners or tenants who are substantially and adversely affected by a proposed modification. Initially, planners had supposed that Southwest would remain a low-income area, but by now it appeared that the area had a "higher potential" and the authorities decided to build a "new town in the city."

In 1980 the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia barred the RLA from implementing Modification 22 without the consent of neighboring property owners. Before implementing any modification of an urban renewal plan, the RLA would be required to determine whether owners or tenants would be affected, and if so to get their agreement.

While use of the land was tied up in litigation for over 30 years, Parcel 76 became a popular and convenient parking lot for Federal employees working in nearby offices. Then, in 2000, after the urban renewal plan's 40-year time frame ended, parking lot users were notified that the land had been purchased to build the 98 high-priced town houses that stand on the site today. The new town houses sell for more than double the prices of similar town houses elsewhere in Southwest. +

Redevelopment Soldiers On





By design the “New Southwest” comprises offices, retail stores, commercial facilities, and highrise condominiums where modest neighborhoods and homes once stood—many of them admittedly in disrepair and worse. Perhaps ironically, luxury residential properties prove to be lucrative investments; witness these townhouses some of which doubled in price within a year. They stand on ground St. Dominic’s hoped would be dedicated to low-income housing.

As St. Dominic's is the closest Catholic church to the Potomac River, it has long been a favorite for boaters. Many skippers use the spire to guide their boats to shore, and Catholics who use the fish wharves and marinas often come to services.

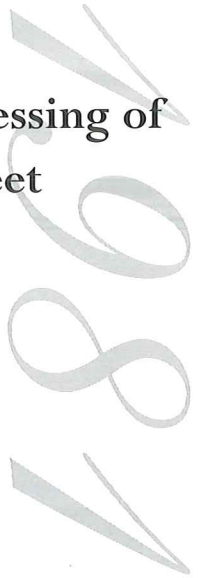
The Blessing of the Fleet each May is a revered tradition whose origins date from biblical times. Priests from the parish, along with ministers from neighborhood churches, conduct the blessing. More than 100 boats with home ports in Washington, Virginia and Maryland participate in the ceremony that calls on God's providence to safeguard vessels and their crews from the dangers of the sea and to ensure their safe return to port.

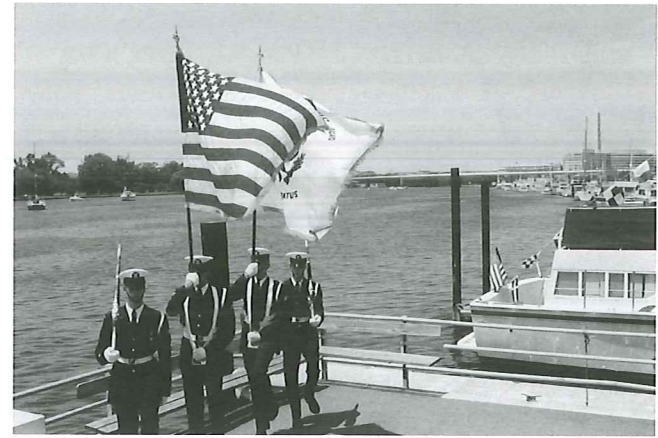
Hosted by the Capital Yacht Club since 1981, the Blessing of the Fleet is an occasion for some twenty-five yacht clubs from all along the Potomac to gather. With the assistance of the Harbor Police, Fire Department and Coast Guard, boats parade past the Potomac wharves at noon and proceed along the front of the Washington Marina to be blessed. Included are the fire boats of the District of Columbia and the large excursion boats that make daily trips to Mt. Vernon in the summer. After the blessing, participants gather at the Capital Yacht Club and along the shore for a festive picnic and entertainment.

The blessing seeks God's protection with this prayer: "We ask your blessing, O Lord, upon these vessels. Protect those who are in them. Bring them to a safe harbor. Protect them in any distress and deliver them from any difficulties. Grant them a safe voyage and a happy landing. You who live and reign forever, Amen." The priest's blessing is then given: "May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon these vessels and those who sail them, and remain with them forever, Amen." The priest then sprinkles holy water toward the boats.

For many sailors, the blessing of the fleet is a milestone that marks a high point of spring, as it is start of the boating season. ✚

The Blessing of The Fleet





Part of the redevelopment of the area involved the waterfront of the Washington Channel, site of piers for excursion boats and recreation craft, a thriving fish market, restaurants, and a stone's throw away the renowned Arena Stage. Each spring the Channel is rendezvous point for Washington's pleasure craft and work boats in the annual Blessing of the Fleet.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, St. Dominic's underwent dramatic renovation—in decor and in ritual—as a result of the Second Vatican Council, which brought changes throughout the Catholic Church worldwide. Vatican II, which was called by Pope John XXIII and sat from October 11, 1962 to December 8, 1965, mandated far-reaching changes in Catholicism worldwide as it introduced new practices in worship and many other aspects of church life. What ensued involved both turmoil and revitalized vision in Catholic worship.

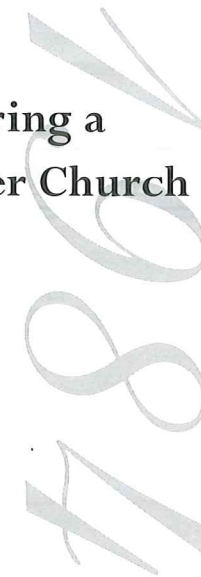
Controversial issues sparked debate among Catholics: What language should be used in the Mass? What is the role of penance in everyday lives? What methods of birth control are open to Catholics? Should priests be allowed to marry? Could women be ordained? What about divorced Catholics? Some parishioners felt more at home after the updating of church teaching and practices. Others lamented the loss of familiar traditions, liturgies and furniture.

Movements that had been under way for decades were incorporated in formal Vatican II documents. Latin as the language of the Mass worldwide was replaced by the *lingua franca* of each congregation—English in most American churches, Spanish and Portuguese in South America—and new emphasis was placed on greater participation by all those present. These reforms involved changes in what came to be

called the “worship space.” The altar was turned toward the people (and the tabernacle placed on a separate altar) so that the celebrant faced the congregation. The communion railing was modified to bring people closer to the altar and to permit them to receive the Eucharist standing rather than kneeling. Devotional images of the Virgin Mary and the saints were relocated in order to place primary focus on the Eucharistic celebration of the Mass. A new emphasis on congregational singing gave parishioners a larger role in parish worship.

St. Dominic's experienced these dramatic changes and more; parishioners would now participate more actively and share the pastor's responsibility for the goals and mission of the parish. One controversy here centered on the removal of eight huge murals. (These were sometimes attributed to Constantino Brumidi, the artist noted for his decorative murals in the United States Capitol, though they were never listed in his official *oeuvre*.) The murals, several of which had deteriorated, were removed as part of the comprehensive renovation. By the late 1980s, the work of the Heritage Committee, which was formed to raise money and oversee the work of restoration, resulted in the beautiful interior that is seen today. ✚

Restoring a Greater Church



Hispanic Celebrations Begin a Tradition

Throughout the years immigrants have found a home at St. Dominic's. Many priests assigned to the parish have served on foreign missions, and can provide cultural and linguistic comfort for newcomers to the United States, some of whom have fled their native lands and seek political asylum. Just as when the waves of emancipated slaves and Irish, German and Italian immigrants came in the 1800s, the tide of Hispanics has brought so many new worshippers to St. Dominic's in the late 20th century that Mass schedules were adjusted to serve this growing segment of the parish.

In 1985, Hispanic parishioners started Mass celebrations in the priory chapel, and in that year the Hispanic celebration of Christmas began at St. Dominic's. During the 1990s, more immigrants came to the United States than during any other single decade in its history. Nationally, these immigrants include some ten million Asians and more than thirty million Hispanics, constituting more than 11 percent of the U.S. population. Throughout these years many Hispanics have been attracted to St. Dominic's. At present Spanish-speaking members of the parish number about 140 and are served by two Dominicans at the 12:15 Mass each Sunday.

In 1990 the parish added a new Spanish language Mass on Sundays, featuring a Spanish choir. St. Dominic's, along with other Catholic churches

throughout the city, offers a rich variety of liturgical celebrations. It is one of twenty-two parishes in the archdiocese that offer Spanish Masses to some 200,000 of the faithful who are Hispanics. †



Over centuries, St. Dominic's has welcomed all manner of migrants, immigrants and other newcomers into its spiritual embrace and physical sanctuary, such as the 19th century's newly freed African-Americans and refugees from the famines and persecutions of Europe's many nations. Most recently the parish's new people are of Hispanic heritage, and their penchant for processions on holy days brings vibrant new color to the parish.

*A*s the last “episode” in this anniversary book, a quick view of our parish and priory today may be useful to coming generations who will write their own chapters in due time.

A parish is, at heart, the place where the love and mercy of the Father, by the saving work of Christ and in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, are made present to us. In accepting this love and mercy, we parishioners are charged to make them also present in our society at large.

At present, 582 families are registered on our rolls. A pastor and two associates serve them, with the help and guidance of the Parish Council. All active committees have a seat on the Council, which meets bimonthly to consider all aspects of parish life. The committees are Liturgy, Social Concerns, Education, and Welcoming. Our current worship schedule offers Mass on Saturdays at 5:15 P.M.; and on Sundays at 8:00 A.M., 10:45 A.M., 12:15 P.M., and 5:15 P.M. On weekdays we offer Mass at: 7:25 A.M., 8:00 A.M., 12:10 P.M. During the week, there are twelve sessions of confessions, six of them with two priests. We offer these weekday services particularly for the many government employees who work in the vicinity of the church.

The Liturgy Committee plans special liturgies for occasions such as the *Triduum* of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter; Christmas, Heritage Sunday, Advent

and Lent. It oversees the ministries of lector, eucharistic ministers, musicians, and altar servers. It sponsors workshops and seminars.

The Welcoming Committee maintains a spirit of fellowship, hospitality and acceptance at our parish. It is responsible for the ushers program as well as many special events, including Heritage Day, Spaghetti Suppers, and receptions for new parishioners as well as weekday parishioners.

The Social Concerns Committee provides a wealth of services to our area. These include providing meals at the feeding charity S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat) and sandwiches at the Randall Shelter for Men; food and clothing drives; ministry at D.C. Jail; and awareness and access for disabled persons. This committee maintains an emergency food and clothing supply. It also supports the Southwest Community House, the Southwest Boys and Girls Clubs, Northwest and Southeast Pregnancy Centers, and Southwest Strengthening Collaborative.

The Education Committee sponsors a series of weekday and Sunday lectures on topics of current interest. Lecturers are local clergy and laity who have expertise in their areas. The Dominican House of Studies is a rich source of presenters.

Other active groups associated with the parish are the Knights of Columbus and The Third Order of St. Dominic, a group of lay persons associated with the work of the Dominican Order.

A Pastor Looks Forward

At present the priory houses twenty-four friars. Some teach at The Catholic University, others help in parish work in other parishes, one works at the Marriage Court, and several officiate at services at the Pentagon. Several friars reside in our Center for Assisted Living, and as their health permits they provide an important service to the parish, especially by hearing confessions before the weekday noon Mass.

Our parish has changed a great deal over the decades, influenced by forces both within and without the Church. But in one aspect it remains the same: We Dominicans are here to serve the people of Southwest Washington area by promoting an active Christian life based and centered on the saving work of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. May His Name be praised forever. †

Father Donald P. Thibault, O. P.

Pastor



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Mary E. Moran, Ph.D.

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